

## Taposiris-Magna (Abusir-Mariout): Through lenses of the Historical Records, Excavations Missions and Restoration Works

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**Abstract:** The city of Taposiris-Magna (Abusir) enjoys a distinct geographical location 45km west of Alexandria, on the northwestern shore of Lake Mariout. It was known in ancient writings as Taposiris or Taphosiris, which refers to its association with the Egyptian god Osiris. It witnessed a human settlement, most notably during the Greek and Roman eras and continued till the 7th century AD. It includes many important ancient monuments, such as the temple, tower, tombs, baths, quarries and other monuments. It received tremendous attention throughout the ages and was mentioned in many ancient historical sources, for example, Greek Manuscripts and Papyri, as well as in the writings of ancient writers, historians, geographers, and others. During the nineteenth century, restoration work on the site began and continues until now. The main objectives of the research are to trace and study the city's historical background and survey the works of archaeological excavations and restoration on that site. The methodology is based on an analytical study of the city's ancient archive through the chronological events from oldest to latest.

**Keywords:** Taposiris-Magna - Abusir-Mariout - Historical writings - Excavations.

تاڤوزيريس ماجنا (أبو صير مريوط): لمحات من السجلات التاريخية وبعثات التنقيب وأعمال الترميم

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**المُلخَص:** تتمتع مدينة تاڤوزيريس ماجنا (أبو صير مريوط) بموقع جغرافي متميز على بعد ٤٥ كم غرب الإسكندرية، وتقع على الشاطئ الشمالي الغربي لبحيرة مريوط، وكانت تعرف في الكتابات القديمة باسم تاڤوزيريس أو تاڤوزيريس، وهي تشير إلى ارتباطها بالمعبود المصري أوزير، وقد شهدت استيطاناً بشرياً أبرزه خلال العصرين اليوناني والروماني واستمر حتى القرن السابع الميلادي، وتضم العديد من الآثار القديمة المهمة، مثل المعبد والبرج والمقابر والحمامات والمحاجر وغيرها من الآثار، وحظيت باهتمام هائل على مر العصور، وورد ذكرها في العديد من المصادر التاريخية القديمة، حيث ذكرت في العديد من المخطوطات والبرديات اليونانية القديمة، وأيضاً في كتابات الكُتَّاب والمؤرخين والجغرافيين القدامى وغيرهم، وفي خلال القرن التاسع عشر بدأت أعمال التنقيب والترميم في الموقع، ومازالت مستمرة حتى الآن، وتتمثل الأهداف الرئيسية للبحث في تتبع ودراسة الخلفية التاريخية للمدينة ومسح أعمال الحفائر الأثرية والترميم في هذا الموقع، وتعتمد منهجية البحث على الدراسة التحليلية الأرشيف القديم للمدينة، من خلال التسلسل الزمني للأحداث من الأقدم إلى الأحدث.

**الكلمات الدالة:** تاڤوزيريس ماجنا - أبو صير مريوط - الكتابات التاريخية - الحفائر.

## 1- Overview of Taposiris-Magna:

### 1.1- Location:

Abusir-Mariout is the ancient site of the Taposiris-Magna (*TMGeo2260*; *Pleiades 727241*). It has a distinguished geographical location on the northern shore of Mareotis Lake, and turns its back on the sea. It is situated approximately 45km west of Alexandria (N 30°56'44" E 29°31'08") on the Western coast of Borg El Arab city. The Large part of the site is located on a hill made of a rocky strip (a series of rocky hills) called Taenia-Ridge (ταυνία meaning “ribbon, band, strip of land, Sandbank”); its wide is less than 1km. This rocky strip separates the Mediterranean Sea from the depression of the Lake-Mareotis, spanning approximately 6km from east to west<sup>1</sup>. The ridge has been used as a burial ground and quarry since ancient times<sup>2</sup>. The town, whose eastern edge is not clearly defined, is delimited on the west by a wall, “The Wall against the Barbarians”, about 2m thick, extending from the port to the sea, providing the inhabitants with a barrier against the attack and traffic controlling along the ridge.<sup>3</sup>

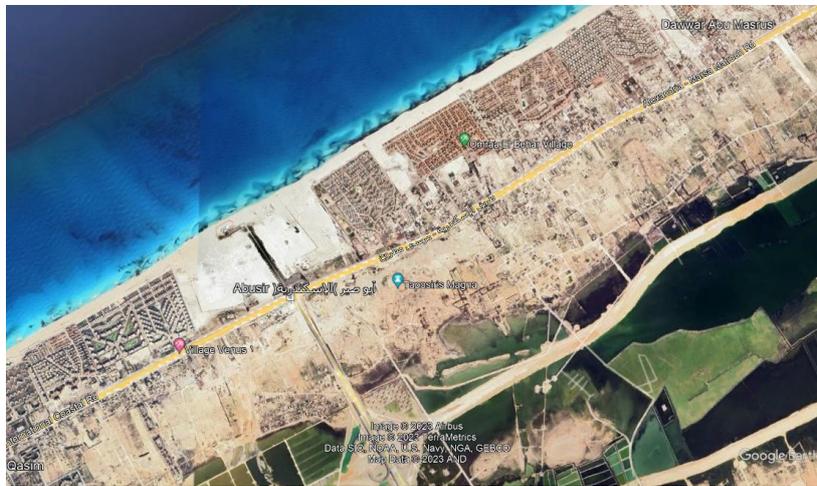


fig.1: Taposiris-Magna location © Google Earth.

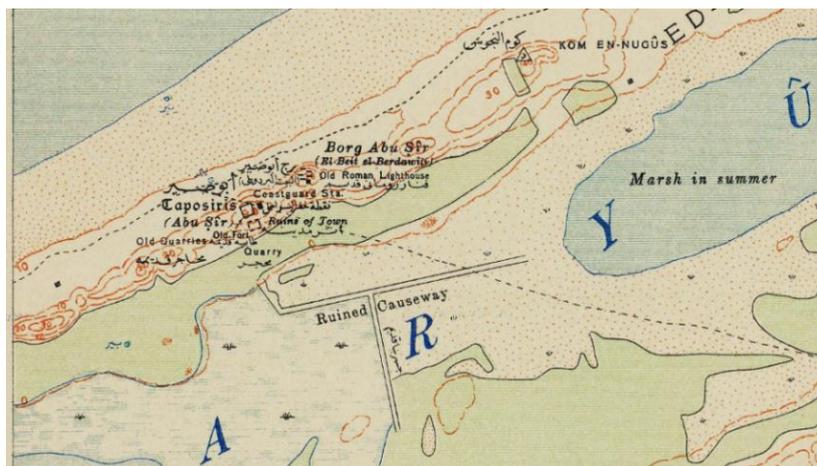


fig.2: Atlas of Egypt, 1912. 1:50000, I, Lower Egypt, Cairo, Pl.47.

<sup>1</sup> F.W., Oliver & A., De Cosson, “Note on the Taenia-Ridge”, *BSRAA* 32, (1938): 162-76; W., Helck, “Taposiris-Magna”, *LÄ* VI, (1985): 232-3.

<sup>2</sup> L., Manniche, “Taposiris Magna”, *Papyrus Ægyptologisk Selskab* 28, (2008): 25.

<sup>3</sup> E.L., Ochsenschlager, “Taposiris-Magna”, *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, K., Bard, (ed.), (New York, 1999): 928-9.

## 1.2- Appellation:

Abusir is derived from the Egyptian name (*Pr-Usir*), “house of god Osiris”, or (*bw-Usir*), “the residence of Osiris.” Currently, there are many cities called Abusir in Egypt.<sup>1</sup> The city’s Ancient name was known as “*Taposiris-Magna/Megale*” (Ταποσιρις Μαγνὰ) to differentiate between it and another ancient city”, *Taposiris-Parva/Mikra*” (Ταποσιρις Μικρά) now Mandarrah, east Alexandria (*TMGeo*, 2261). It was also attested in various documents as “Taphosiris, Taposeiris, Tapostri, Busiris, Busir”. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the site was identified as the town of Taposiris-Magna. Many inscriptions notably confirm this identification, were discovered at Abusir bearing the name of “*Taposiris*”:

(1) A fragment base of a black granite votive statuette, found by Breccia, dedicated by the priests of Taposiris, now housing in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria, Inv.21451. Its text contains the city’s name as “*The priests from Taposiris (honour) Chares the son of Chares the pious.*”<sup>2</sup>



fig.3: A base statuette, Greco-Roman Museum. Inv.21451.<sup>3</sup>

(2): A stone plaque from the imperial period was uncovered in the temple by a Hungarian mission, bearing three preserved lines and mentioning the city's name in the first line.:“... (Ἴσι)δι ἐν Ταποσιρι[άδι]... *Isis in Taposiris*...”<sup>4</sup>



fig.4: A dedication stone plaque for Isis (Taposiris).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Abusir in Dakahlia, Abusir al-Khanka, Abusir Banna in Gharbia, Abusir in Giza, Abusir al-Malq in Beni Suef, Abusir al-Bahnasa in Mina, Abusir Qift in Qena, and Abusir at the Second Cataract in Aswan.

<sup>2</sup> *TM*, 959722; E., Breccia, *Alexandrea ad Aegyptum, A Guide To The Ancient And Modern Town and it's Graeco-Roman Museum*, (Bergamo: Instituto d'Arti Grafiche, 1922), 338; A.K., Bowman, (et al.), *Corpus of Ptolemaic inscriptions, I, Alexandria and the Delta (Nos. 1-206)*, (Oxford University Press, 2021), 140.

<sup>3</sup> G., Vörös, *Taposiris-Magna 2: 1998 – 2004, A temple, fortress, and monastery of Egypt*, (Budapest: Egypt Excavation Society of Hungary, 2004), 38; M.-F., Boussac, “Recherches récentes à Taposiris-Magna et Plinthine (1998-2006)”, *CRAIBL* 2007 (2009): 447, fig.2b.

<sup>4</sup> *TM*, 701157; Vörös, *Taposiris-Magna 2*, 66; A., Chaniotis, (et al.) (eds.), *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, 60 (2010), (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1812.bis.2.

<sup>5</sup> Vörös, *Taposiris-Magna 2*, 66.

(3): A white marble stela includes a 10-line inscription in Greek, found by Egyptian-Dominican mission, Local Inv.no.32, Ptolemaic Period, reign of Ptolemy IV (221-204 BC): “*In favor of the victory of King Ptolemy and in favor of the Queen Arsinoe, the Father-loving Gods, to Sarapis and to Isis, who is in Taposiris, and to Apollo of Mareotis, while Theodo[ros, son of N.N.] was priest.*” Sarapis is most likely understood here as the Greek interpretation of Osiris, the god who was worshipped in Taposiris-Magna with his spouse Isis. The god, “Apollo of Mareotis”, seems to be attested here in Greek and Egyptian sources for the first time. Perhaps, the three gods were forming the local divine triad of Taposiris-Magna.<sup>1</sup>

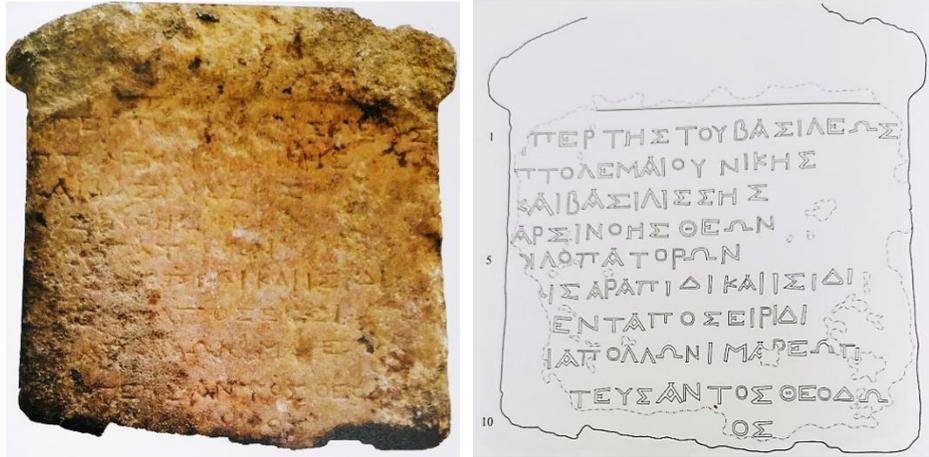


fig.5: A white marble Stela, Local Inv.no.32.<sup>2</sup>

(4): A stone plaque of white marble altar, with three lines of a Greek inscription, found by Egyptian-Dominican mission, Local Inv.no.358, Roman period: “*To Isis of Taposiris and to the temple-sharing gods ...*”, this altar might be initially placed in the temple's main sanctuary.<sup>3</sup>



fig.6: A stone plaque of white marble altar, Local Inv.no.358.<sup>4</sup>

The Bedouins refer to the ancient temple of Taposiris-Magna as “Kasr el-Bardauil”, as they considered it the palace of Abu-Zeit, who conquered the Berbers<sup>5</sup>. The ancient

<sup>1</sup> K., Martinez, (et al.), “New evidence for the worship of Isis and Osiris from Taposiris Magna”, *Guardian of ancient Egypt*, Studies in Honor of Zahi Hawass, J., Kamrin, (et al.) (eds.), II, (Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Arts, 2020): 1010-12.

<sup>2</sup> Martinez, “New evidence”: 1011-2, fig.6-7.

<sup>3</sup> Martinez, “New evidence”: 1013-4.

<sup>4</sup> Martinez, “New evidence”: 1013-4, fig.10-11.

<sup>5</sup> H., Thiersch, *Pharos. Antike, Islam und Occident. Ein Beitrag zur Architekturgeschichte*, (Leipzig-Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1909), 203.

stone tower of Taposiris was firstly referred to as the “Torre degli Arabi” (Tower of the Arabs) by Giovanni da Cagnano (priest and a pioneering cartographer from Genoa, 1250-1330 AD) in the fourteenth century<sup>1</sup>. This name was later used to refer to the settlement as a whole. At present, the name “Borg el-Arab (Tower of Arabs)” is given to the modern town, which takes its name from the “Borg” or “tower” of Taposiris-Magna.<sup>2</sup>



fig.7: Taposiris Magna tower photo by researcher.

### 1.3- Historical Background:

The exact date of the city's foundation is undefined and complicated, as ancient travellers and writers only provided minimal hints about it. But the city was inhabited from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC until the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. The origin of the city is dated back to before the Ptolemaic era, with a peak of activity in the Roman-Byzantine period. In the Ptolemaic and Roman eras, the city gained significant importance. During the reign of Emperor Justinian I (527-565 CE), it was wholly re-developed and constructed till the end of the Byzantine period. It continued its flourishing until the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Some artefacts were excavated there dating back to the Islamic era, such as lambs. Possibly, the city was neglected as a result of earthquakes and floods.<sup>3</sup>

Taposiris-Magna includes other Hellenistic and Roman structures besides the temple and tower as follows: Human Cemeteries, a necropolis of mummified animals, an underground Ptolemaic bath, a Byzantine bath, Wells, Quarries, cisterns, Underground aqueduct, Houses, kilns and Harbour.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A., De Cosson, “Notes on the Coast Road between Alexandria and Mersa-Matruh”, *BSRAA* 54, (1941): 51.

<sup>2</sup> H., Kees, “Taposiris”, *Paulys Real-Encyclopdie der Classischen Altertums'wissenschaft, Neue Bearbeitung* IV. A.2, (Stuttgart, 1932): 2259-60.

<sup>3</sup> Boussac, “Recherches récentes”: 455.

<sup>4</sup> Boussac, “Recherches récentes”: 445-79.

#### 1.4- Economical Significance:

The region was prosperous commercially, which included many establishments and shops. It witnessed significant progress and development due to its location on the northwestern edge of Lake Mareotis, which consists of several isolated basins connected only sporadically to the lake's central basin. The city became a crucial regional and international trade point because of digging canals during the Roman era. In classic times, the lake's water was fresh, sourced from the Canopic branch of the Nile with other tributaries. It made the surrounding land fertile and suitable for agriculture, especially vine cultivation. The city was known for producing the best types of wine, as evidently in the archaeological plant discoveries. The Mariotic wine gained wide fame in literary sources and had the honour of being mentioned or celebrated by Virgil, Horace, Lucan, Strabo, Columella and Athenaeus (there was a sweet white wine called “Ταινιωτικός”).<sup>1</sup>

The harbour of Taposiris was once a gateway to Egypt during the Roman period, and possibly even as early as the Hellenistic period. It was built on the northern shore of Lake-Mareotis and was separated from the lake by a long artificial levee. The layout of the closed system was a key to the lasting prosperity of the city (Warehouses and harbour structures were operated until the 7th century). The urban expansion in Roman and Late Roman times is noticeable.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1.5- Religious Importance:

The city had great religious importance, evidenced by its ancient name, which testified to the worship of the ancient Egyptian god Osiris. Also, the existing temple's architectural design resembles the style that prevailed in the ancient Egyptian temples in Dendera, Esna, Edfu, Kom Ombo, and Philae. Abusir temple became an essential center for worshipping Osiris/Sarapis, Isis-Taposiris, and Apollo-Mareotis during the Greek-Roman periods<sup>3</sup>. It also contains the remains of a Christian church built in the 4th century AD.<sup>4</sup>

#### 1.6- Ancient Historical Sources:

The historical background of Taposiris-Magna is mentioned in many ancient historical sources, reflecting its importance and vivid location. It is mentioned in several Greek papyri as: P.Tebtynis.III 845 (264 BC), P.Lond.IV 1912v (41 AD), P.SB.XXII.15561 (100-199 AD), P.Michigan.III 206 (175-199 AD), P.Hamburg.I 39 2 (179 AD), P.Oxyrhynchus.LV 3820 (340 AD?), and P.Oxyrhynchus.LXIII.4394 (494 AD). The significance of the city is revealed through what is narrated by the ancient Historians, classical writers who visited it or wrote about it, such as; Strabo (64 BC-23 AD), Caius Plinius Secundus (23-79 AD), Pedanios Dioscorides (40-90 AD), Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus (45-125 AD), Claudius Ptolemaeus (117-160 AD), Pseudo-Callisthenes (C.2 AD), Eusebius of Caesarea (263-340 AD), Synesius of Cyrene (373-

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<sup>1</sup> Breccia, *A Guide to the Ancient and Modern*, 336; M.-F., Boussac, & M., El-Amouri, “The lake structures at Taposiris”, *Lake-Mareotis Conference: Reconstructing the past*, L., Blue, & E., Khalil, (eds.), (Oxford, 2010): 87-105.

<sup>2</sup> M.-F., Boussac, “Recent works at Taposiris and Plinthine”, *BSAA* 49, (2015): 200-2.

<sup>3</sup> M.-F., Boussac, “À propos des divinités de Taposiris-Magna à l'époque hellénistique”, *Paysage et religion en Grèce antique*, P., Carlier, & Ch., Lerouge-Cohen, (éd.), (Paris, 2010): 69-74; Vörös, *Taposiris-Magna* 2, 66; Chaniotis, *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, 1812; Martinez, “New evidence”: 1001-22; Bowman, *Corpus of Ptolemaic inscriptions*, I, 137-8.

<sup>4</sup> P., Grossmann, “A new church at Taposiris Magna-Abusir”, *BSAC* 31, (1992): 25-30.

414 AD), Stephanus Byzantinus (C.6th AD), Procopius Caesarensis (500-560 AD). Finally, the city is attested in the Stadiasmus Maris Magni (Stadiasmus of the Great Sea) (C.3 AD), and the Tabula Peutingeriana (Peutinger Table) (C.13 AD).<sup>1</sup>

## **2- History of Writings about Taposiris-Magna:**

### **2.1- Eighteenth-Century Writings:**

#### **2.1.1- Jean-Baptiste Le Mascrier (1697-1760).**

He focused his book on Ancient and Modern Geography, Antiquities, Literature, Governance, Trade, Animals, and Plants. He said: *“The first place worthy of note that we encountered on the left of Alexandria was the false town of Necropolis, that is to say the City, or the habitation of the dead, which extended over the space of a large league between the sea and Lake Mareotis, stretching towards the Tower of the Arabs, with an approximately equal width. It was in this place that by a laudable custom the Greeks and Romans were keen to bury their dead. But we must not imagine that this place was anything but sad and gloomy, like our cemeteries, whose harsh appearance is horrifying. It was mainly in this place that the most beautiful Palaces of the Grands were seen, and their pleasure houses, which with their gardens and other outbuildings, formed a fruitful City, almost larger and much gayer, than that of Alexandria”.*<sup>2</sup>

#### **2.1.2- Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville (1697-1782).**

A manuscript was released by d'Anville, called “Diaries of Ancient and Modern Egypt.” He said about the site: *“We recognize, according to Herodotus, the Gulf of Plinthine as the limit of Egypt towards the west; this is what is customary in modern maps to name the Gulf of the Arabs. On the point of land which closes the bordering side of Egypt, there is an old fortress; whose name of Abusir, or Busiri according to Leo Africanus (1488-1554), clearly preserves that of Taposiris, of which there is mention in several authors of antiquity. In Ptolemy, Taposiris placed inland, cedes the maritime position to Plinthine, from which the gulf took its name: from the fact that the name that Taposiris bore remained at a place close to the sea, we can infer that Taposiris & Plinthine were in close proximity, perhaps contiguous places”.*<sup>3</sup>

## **2.2- Nineteenth-Century Writings:**

### **2.2.1- Description de l'Égypte.**

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Taposiris-Magna was visited by scholars of the French Campaign scientists (Savants) who brought its valuable descriptions and recorded its monuments and remains in the Description de l'Égypte. The fifth volume was to document the remaining archaeological relics. It firstly portrays a map of the freshly-revived lake, not much smaller than its size in antiquity.

The site's survey is devoted to a separate table of Taposiris. Ancient monuments are labelled “Ruines de Taposiris”, “Tour des Arabes” (i.e. the ancient stone tower), and “Koum Abousyr” (i.e. Kom Nugus, in antiquity Plinthine). The remains of a huge

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<sup>1</sup> Forthcoming Article: A., Youssef, “Taposiris-Magna (Abusir-Mariout): Gleanings from Ancient Historical Sources”, *Delta Reports, The Archaeology of the Nile Delta and Related studies*, (2024).

<sup>2</sup> J.-B., Le Mascrier, *Description de l'Égypte: contenant plusieurs remarques curieuses sur la géographie ancienne et moderne de ce Païs, sur ses monuments anciens, sur ses mœurs, sur le gouvernement et le commerce, sur les animaux, les arbres, les plantes, & c.: composée sur les mémoires de M. de Maillet, ancien Consul de France au Caire*, (Paris: Chez Rollin fils, 1735), 135-7.

<sup>3</sup> J.-B.B., Anville, *Mémoires sur l'Égypte ancienne et moderne, suivis d'une description du Golfe Arabique et de la mer Rouge*, (Paris: de L'imprimerie royale, 1766), 63-4.

ancient road, which once ran from Alexandria to Taposiris-Magna, were first marked on the map. In addition, six lithographs of the ancient monuments of Taposiris are drawn with the highest technical precision. The first of these is an architectural drawing of the eastern façade of the temple's entrance, specifically the remains of the pylon, which consisted of three storeys high two hundred years ago, not two as they are today. The pylons stood more than fifteen meters high. As seen in the drawing of the ground plan of the temple, part of its western wall was entirely covered by debris. The precise layout of the tower entrance gate was presented in a separate section from the inner chambers at the foundation level. The eastern façade of the north-eastern corner of the temenos wall was shaded with broad stones to show the height of the temple's ground floor. In the drawing of the stone tower, which can be viewed from the south, an enormous construction resembles an ancient tomb. Furthermore, there is a drawing of a crypt underneath, together with a view of the stone tower from above, thus emphasising the connection between these two architectural structures, one gouged out of the rock and the other built on top of it. The present temple and the stone tower emphasise its ruined state, unlike the surface of the outer walls, which could have been preserved so pristinely. The depiction of the exterior facade of the walls is probably a reconstruction.

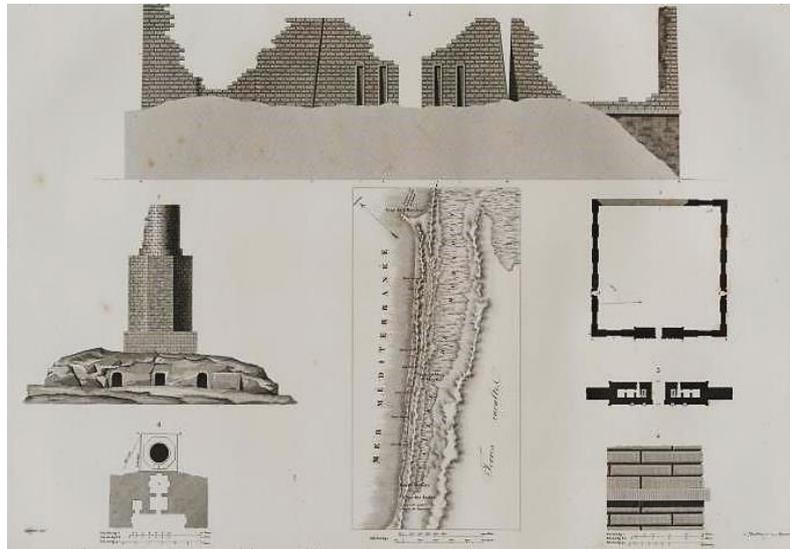


fig.8: The temple and tower and the map as *Description de l'Égypte*.<sup>1</sup>

### Jean Saint-Geniès (1776-1836).

Saint-Geniès was the architect in charge of the city's survey and recorded many observations in the eighteenth volume of the *Description de l'Égypte*: "Remains of fluted columns and Doric capitals which one finds in the ruins of the enclosure." This remark is striking.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.2.2- Jean-François Champollion (1790-1832).

Champollion narrated in his book «Egypt under the Rule of the Pharaohs» that "It is on the far western side of Lake Mariout, near the Mediterranean Sea, the village of Taposiris is located and called Abu Sir or Burj Al Arab."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E.F., Jomard, (éd.), *Description de l'Égypte*, Antiquités, planches, V, (Paris: France, 1823), pl.43.

<sup>2</sup> E.F., Jomard, (éd.), *Description de l'Égypte*, État Moderne, XVIII, (Paris: France, 1829), 29-57.

<sup>3</sup> J.-F., Champollion, *L'Égypte sous les pharaons, ou recherches sur la géographie, la religion, la langue, les écritures et l'histoire de l'Égypte avant l'invasion de Cambyse*, II, (Paris: Chez de Bure, 1814), 267-8.

### 2.2.3- Gratien Le Père (1769-1826).

He gave an account of the lakes and deserts of Lower Egypt as well as notes on geographical nature of Abusir and its ancient case.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.2.4- Johann Martin Augustine Scholz (1794-1852).

Scholz, a German translator, wrote about his journey to Alexandria, Paraetionium, the Libyan Desert, and Siwa between 1820 and 1821. He described the Abusir temple remains and the city's tower.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.2.5- Heinrich Menu von Minutoli (1772-1846).

Minutoli, an archaeologist and excavator, described and painted the ruins of the Abusir temple and tower, along with Kôm el-Nogous (Plinthine), on his voyages to the Temple of Jupiter Amon in the Libyan Desert and to Upper Egypt in 1820 and 1821.<sup>3</sup>

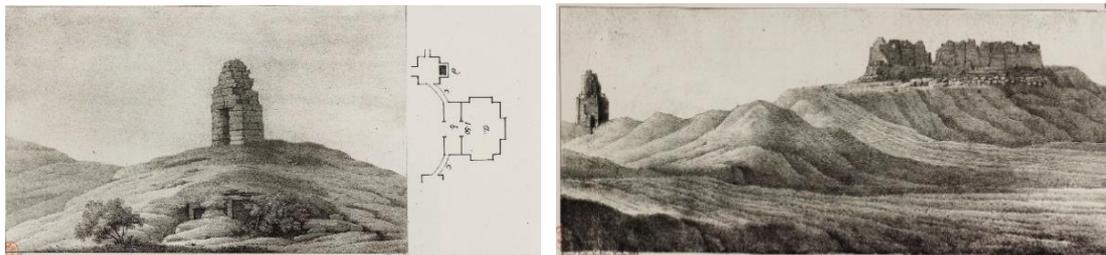


fig.9: The temple and tower as drawn by Minutoli.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.2.6- Jean-Raimond Pacho (1794-1829).

Pacho, a traveler, narrated his journey to Marmarica (Tobruk) and Cyrenaica in 1824 AD. He provided drawings for the temple and the tower. He commented that “*I searched in vain among the ruins of Abusir for some vestiges of the monuments of ancient Egypt, I was unable to discover anything which had its own and entirely distinctive characteristics. Apart from the ruins of the temple, .... All that remains is purely Greek, Roman or Arabic.*”<sup>5</sup>. Excavations proved him wrong and revealed that indigenous traditions had their place in a heavily Hellenized setting.

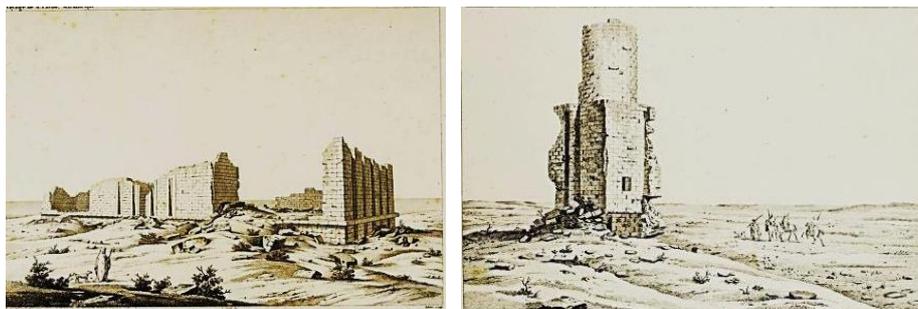


fig.10: The temple and tower as drawn by Pacho.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G., Le Père, *Mémoire sur les lacs et les déserts de la Basse Égypte et observations géologiques sur la nature et l'état ancien de cette contrée*, (Paris, Impr. Royale, 1819), 2-6.

<sup>2</sup> A., Scholz, *Reise in die Gegend zwischen Alexandrien und Parätonium, die libysche Wüste, Siwa, Egypten, Palästina und Syrien, in den Jahren 1820 und 1821*, (Leipzig: F. Fleischer, 1822), 48-52.

<sup>3</sup> H.M., Minutoli, *Reise zum Tempel des Jupiter Ammon in der libyschen Wüste und nach Ober-Aegypten in den Jahren 1820 und 1821*, I-II, (Berlin: Maurer, 1824), 41-8.

<sup>4</sup> Minutoli, *Reise zum Tempel des Jupiter Ammon*, Tab.II.1-III.1.

<sup>5</sup> J.-R., Pacho, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique, la Cyrénaïque et les oasis d'Audjelah et de Maradèh*, accompagnée de cartes géographiques et topographiques et de planches présentant les monuments de ces contrées, avec Frédéric Müller, I-II, (Paris: Didot, 1827-9), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Pacho, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique*, pl.I-II2.

### 2.2.7- Bayle Frederick St. John (1822-1859).

Bayle, a British writer, described his journey with his friends in his book the remnants of Abusir: “Again, I had the chance to check Abusir ruins that had not the sufficient interest by the travelers. Although its massive size did not attract tourists, it is the only fascinating ancient relic in Egypt north of the pyramids. Once you cut halfway along the valley that leads to Abusir, these majestic relics appear on the horizon visible, often rising high in the air and casting in imaginary shapes.” From where he was able to make a significant scientific observation: “We noticed that the western or hack wall (of the temple enclosure) was composed in part of pieces of columns sawn into proper lengths, with the interstices filled up by cement.” He added some observances about Abusir tower: “The tower is of a unique shape, consisting of a square base above it, octagonal building and then round. The upper part formerly seemed much higher than it is now and shaped like a pillar, but now it is broken and ruined. The base and the first section had intentionally hidden gabs might be used in climbing to the upper most top. Lambort (one of Bayle friends) uncovered remains of stairs in the northern side, which formerly existed. that the tower was purposed to be as a landmark for lightening. There are enlighten chamber in rock with entrance from the south..... That M. de Laurin, Austrian Consul - General at Alexandria, possesses a small statue of Victory and a head of Augustus in marble, found by some excavators here....”<sup>1</sup>

### 2.2.8- Mahmoud Pasha al-Falaki (1815-1885).

Al-Falaki was ordered by Khedive Ismail to research the city of Alexandria and its districts, make excavations, and define the ancient city's layout. He recorded what was discovered in the excavations and became one of the pioneers who defined the landmarks and directions of the ancient city of Alexandria. He wrote his research in French in 1872. His grandson, Mahmoud Saleh Al-Falaki, translated it into Arabic in 1967. He wrote: “Innumerable fields that we can still see today are called «Karm» or vineyard. We constantly find, when excavating among the ruins of the countless town lets and villages of the district, the remains of wine-factories, presses, cisterns, water wheels and wells, all of this proving the past prosperity of the country and the abundance of its wine and oil products and confirming the statements of ancient writers concerning the beauty of this vine-land and the wealth of its large population”<sup>2</sup>. Al-Falaki specified in his study the borders of the suburb of Taposiris, which proved to be entirely exact.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> B.F., St. John, *Adventures in the Libyan Desert and the oasis of Jupiter Ammon*, (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1849), 9-20.

<sup>2</sup> M., Al-Falaki, *Mémoire sur l'antique Alexandrie, ses faubourgs et environs découverts par les fouilles, sondages, nivellements et autres recherches*, (Copenhague: Bianco Luno, 1872), 23.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Falaki, *Mémoire sur l'antique Alexandrie*, 97-8.



fig.11: Map of the surroundings of Alexandria Containing Lake Maréotis.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.2.9- Xavier Pascal Coste (1787-1879).

Pascal Coste was a French architect. He was at one time a private architect for Muhammad Ali Pasha in 1817. In 1825, Muhammad Ali made him chief engineer for Lower Egypt. Coste dealt with Taposiris in his Memoires: “In August 1820, the pasha sent me to the so-called Arab tower, northwest of Alexandria and 36 kilometers away, to reconnoiter the Aboucir valley, where the nomadic Arabs of this region claimed that we could, by the construction of a canal, to pour the waters of the Nile, in order to be able to cultivate it. The so-called Arab tower, which I mentioned above, appears to be of Roman construction. Behind the south face of this tower are various chambers cut into the limestone rock; they apparently served as accommodation for the guardians of this tower. All the way round this ruin and in its centre one sees fragments of capitals, of cornices with triglyphs, fluted column drum's 55cm in diameter and other details of the Greek Doric. This supports the assumption that this building is of the Ptolemaic period.”<sup>2</sup>

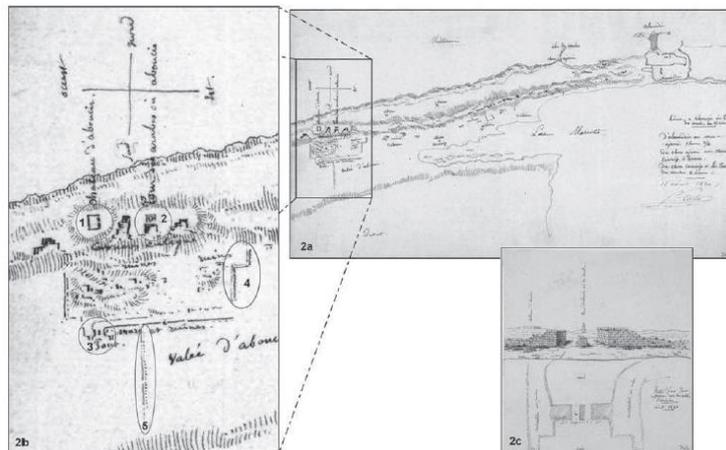


fig.12: General plan of Alexandria to Abousir by Pascal Coste in 1820.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M., Al-Falaki, *Carte des environs d'Alexandrie Contenant le lac Maréotis, ceux d'Aboukir et d'Edkou ainsi que les anciens cours d'eaux et les villes dont les emplacements y sont déterminés par mes propres recherches*, (Alexandrie, 1866).

<sup>2</sup> P., Coste, *Mémoires d'un artiste: Notes et souvenirs de voyages (1817-1877)*, (Marseille: Caver, 1878), 31-2.

<sup>3</sup> Boussac & El-Amouri, “The lake structures at Taposiris”: 89, fig.2.

### 2.2.10- Luigi Robecchi Bricchetti (1855-1926).

Bricchetti was an excavator, geographer, cartographer, and naturalist. In 1890 AD, he journeyed to Jupiter Amun's oasis. On his way, he described and drew the ruins of Abusir, especially the temple, the tower, the tombs, and the port dam. *“On the way back I go to wander among the few shocking ruins of Abusir, where the northern latitude is 30° 57'40". In Abusir, ancient Taposiris, which is part of the Mareotide valley (Wadi Mariut), so called from the ancient city of Marea, a canton once renowned for its vineyards, and whose territory, according to history, was covered with houses and gardens that extended up to the province of Barka, the vegetation is now very impoverished. Among the ruins of Abusir, the most notable and considerable are those of a temple, of which only four walls remain, approximately 80 meters long and over one meter wide, placed on an elevation of land not far from the sea shore. Opposite these ruins there are other ruins of more recent origin and of no importance - a few ruined walls - and the remains of an ancient masonry well about 20 meters deep, but without water. Near the ruins of the temple there are the remains of another building known under the name "Tower of the Arabs". It is a small tower on a square plinth, and divided into two floors, of which the lower is octagonal in shape, and the the upper part is more rounded and cylindrical in shape. Towards the southern part of the rock on which it was built, you can still see a funerary cave divided into two parts, where you can see some large but shallow niches, with inaccurate workmanship. Other ruins of Taposiris, a short distance from the sea, are found partly on the southern slope of a hill perforated by several burial caves. You can also see the remains of a dam, running from east to west, which was built to the south of the city, perhaps to preserve this locality from the floods of Mareotide lake. Among the large piles of stones you can see the foundations of ancient buildings divided into several blocks and covered in concrete.”*<sup>1</sup>

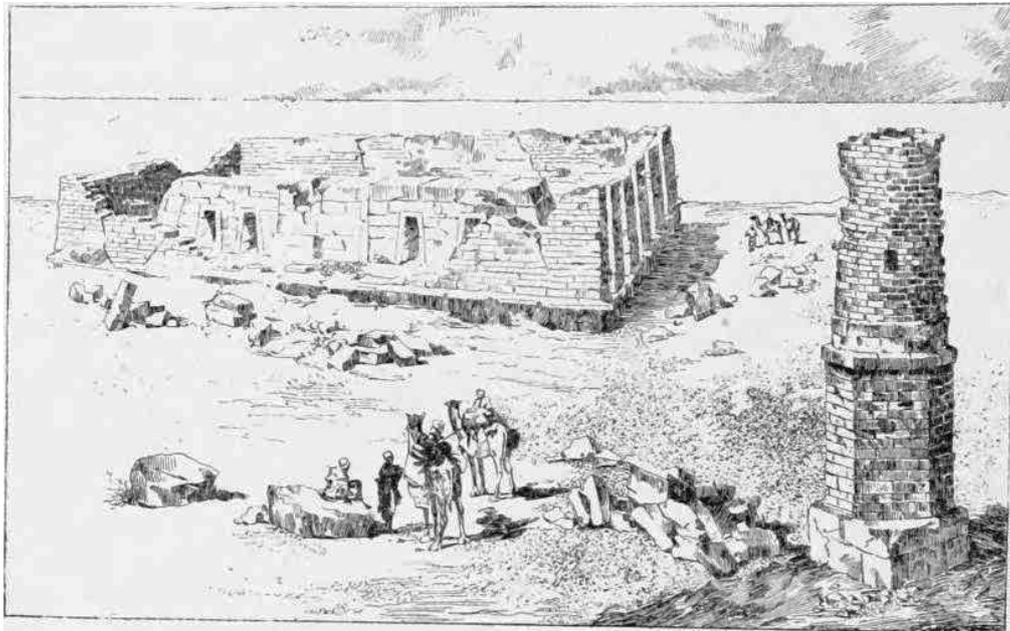


fig.13: Ruins of a temple, and Tower of the Arabs in Abusir.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> L.R., Bricchetti, *All'oasi di Giove Ammone: viaggio, con 164 incisioni e una grande carte geografica*, (Milano: Fratelli Treves, 1890), 34-7.

<sup>2</sup> Bricchetti, *All'oasi di Giove Ammone*, 36.

## 2.3- Twentieth-Century Writings:

### 2.3.1- Pachundaki, D.E. (1877-....).

Pachundaki, a biologist, Egyptian naturalist and the director of the Royal Institute of Hydrobiology, visited Abusir during the geological survey of the Alexandrine coast. During his visit to Taposiris in June 1900, he reported to the Egyptological Institute and sent a letter to Mr. Furtan. Pachundaki mentioned in his letter that the commander of the coastal garrison presented him with a marble bludgeon, evidently a piece of a fallen statue of Hercules. He narrated what he saw: *“While traveling around the surroundings of Abusir, I entered a necropolis which I believe it my duty to point out to the attention of the scholars who deal with our region. At the foot of the southern slope of the hill dominated today by the ruins of Kasr el-Berdawili and the coast guard camp, we find, following a path starting from these ruins, some tombs that legend attributes to soldiers of the lord who would have built the fort. A few steps from these tombs, we see an opening barely a meter in diameter and having all the appearances of an ancient well, now dried up, as we frequently encounter in this part of Mariout. I descended using a ladder lent to me by the coast guard and suddenly found myself in a large circular room whose smooth walls were covered with Greek inscriptions in black. Numerous small loculi regularly made in the limestone rock are its only ornament. The floor of the room is buried under a thick layer of trash. A side opening allows you to crawl into an adjacent vault which must have been pillaged by the Bedouins a short time ago”* At the end of his letter, *“it would be desirable that this cemetery be studied before moisture or unholy hands erase the rest forever of these inscriptions, which could perhaps bring a new contribution to the history of the ancient city of Taposiris-Magna”*.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.3.2- Hermann Thiersch (1874-1939).

Thiersch visited the site in May 1902 AD and gave a detailed architectural description of the two monuments in Taposiris in his book *Pharos*, which included twelve photographs of the temple and the stone tower before the excavations and restoration work. His observations concerning the temple are remarkably restrained and measured. He carefully studied the architectural elements of the former Doric-columned sanctuary and gave precise measurements. If he had been aware of the measurements of the ground plan of the original sanctuary, he might have gone as far as preparing a theoretical reconstruction of the building. He paid close attention to signs carved into the stonework, which he collected. These were all letters of the Greek alphabet and other signs used by Hellenistic construction.

One of his most interesting observations about the temple is the Roman number XXIII, engraved in one of the column drums at the top of the north-western corner wall. He claimed in his research that the tower above the enormous tomb of Taposiris was none other than a miniature replica of the Pharos in Alexandria. At the end of his research, he said that: *“The ruins of Taposiris-Magna await a scientific survey and in-depth archaeological research. The conditions are unusually suitable...; a railway of Mariout allows regular access to the place. The Egyptian Coast Guard residence effectively protects against the Bedouins. There is no doubt that the cleaning operation will be feasible here”*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D.E., Pachundaki, & F., Innes Walter, “Séance du 1 décembre 1902”, *BIE* 3, (1902): 185-8.

<sup>2</sup> Thiersch, *Pharos*, 26-31, 202-11, 378-91.

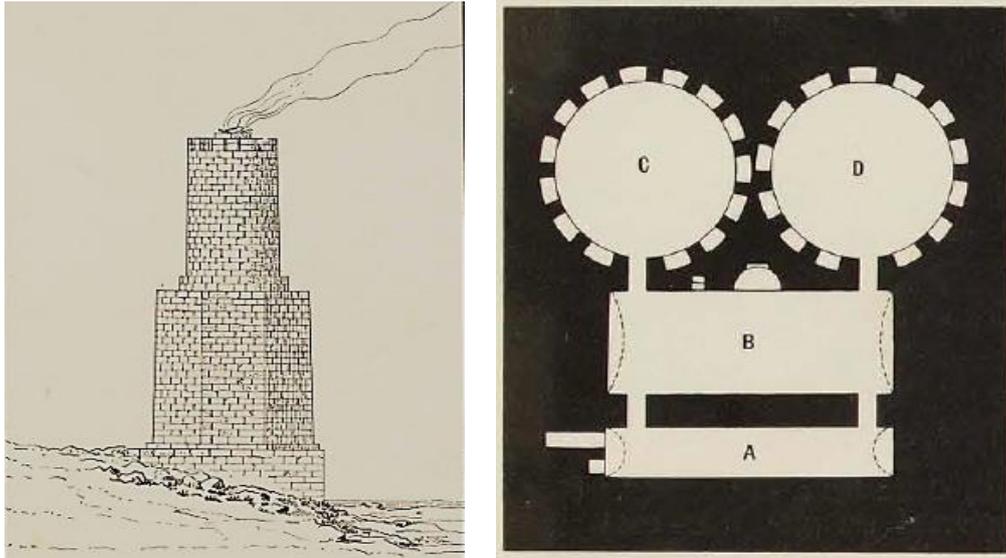


fig.14: Drawings of the tower of Taposiris and The Ptolemaic bath.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.3.3- Charles Anthony De Cosson (1911-2011).

De Cosson visited Taposiris-Magna in 1935 AD and said: “*Since the ancient wonders of Alexandria have disappeared, this city is the finest ancient relic left to us north of the pyramids, dates back to a period earlier than the foundation of Alexandria.*” However, he drew the port of Taposiris, which constituted a thin strip of land in a predominantly water environment on his map, but most of the land outside the water and the port was limited. De Cosson believed that the sanctuary with the Doric columns had been destroyed in 391, at the same time as the Serapeum in Alexandria. He thought that it was older than the remnant of Temenos wall. He was disturbed by the poor condition of the Taposiris relics and immediately requested their restoration.<sup>2</sup>

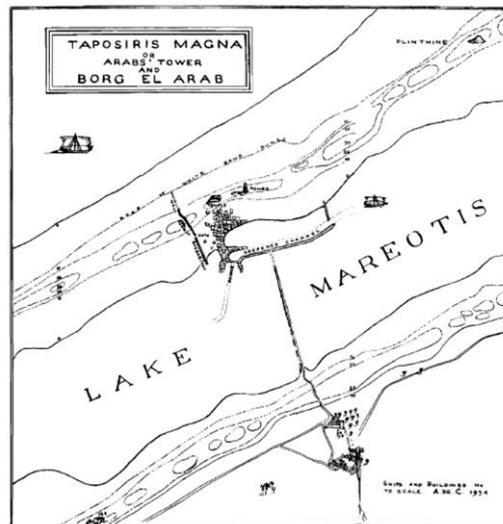


fig.15: Map of the remains of the ancient city of Taposiris.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thiersch, *Pharos*, Abb.41-9.

<sup>2</sup> A., De Cosson, *Mareotis: Being a Short Account of the History and Ancient Monuments of the North-Western Desert of Egypt and of Lake Mareotis*, (London: Country Life, 1935), 109-14, 201ff.

<sup>3</sup> De Cosson, *Mareotis*, 110.

### 2.3.4- Francis Wall Oliver (1864–1951).

Oliver gained access to the map that the British had collected from military reconnaissance photographs, for which permission for public use was granted. Looking through the photographs, he made an exciting discovery: a 45-kilometre ancient stone road stretched from Alexandria to Taposiris-Magna, 10.67 meters wide, ending at the temple. A short stretch of the road was already marked on the map drawn by the *Description de l'Égypte*, but Oliver's observation is much more significant: *"The relative importance of the great Temple of Osiris at Abu Sir in Ptolemaic times cannot be overlooked and it is possible that the first section of this military road from Alexandria to the West, between the city and the temple, was made on a grand scale to serve as a ceremonial way - prolongation of the Canopic Street which ran through Alexandria from the Gate of the Sun to the Gate of the Moon. With the rise of Christianity pilgrimages to the Temple would have ceased"*.<sup>1</sup>

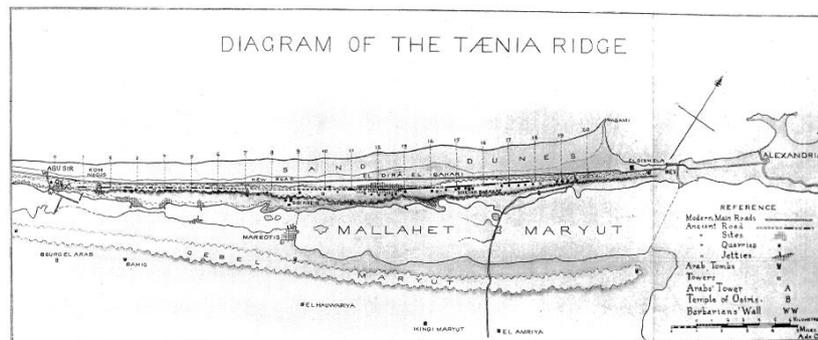


fig.16: De Cosson's 1938 map of the Mareotis region.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.3.5- John Bryan Ward Perkins (1912-1981).

Ward Perkins was an architectural historian and British archaeologist. In 1943, he was the first to issue a new ground plan of the site since the publication of *Description de l'Égypte*. He paid attention to studying the church of Abusir temple and drawing its layout. He cleared that it was built in two phases. The first phase was constructing a Syrian-style church in the fourth century, while the second was its later extension. Nevertheless, he wrongly called it a monastery of Az-Zajag. He said: *"The temple itself has gone, but the massive walls of the enclosure are still largely standing; and within them are the traces of an early Christian community"*. It is known for the history of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church at Alexandria that there was formerly a monastery at Taposiris. An enormously significant text was written by Severus Ibn al-Muqaffa in the tenth century about a problematic occurrence there in 689 AD. The death of Patriarch Isaac generated a pressing question of succession, and a fervent debate ensued between the priests of the individual temples as to who the new patriarch should be. One of the candidates was *"zz man whose name was Victor, Hegumen of the monastery of Taposiris, who was also an excellent person"*. Perkins referred to the massive work of clearing and conservation undertaken on the site at least two occasions within the last thirty-five years; however, an adequate plan for the city's remnants has yet to be published. Therefore, the survey of the Christian structures has been prepared for record purposes. No trace remains of any decoration that the walls may once have carried. There is no monument in the Mariout more likely to yield results of the highest

<sup>1</sup> Oliver, & De Cosson, "Note on the Taenia-Ridge": 172-4.

<sup>2</sup> Oliver, & De Cosson, "Note on the Taenia-Ridge": Pl.XVI.

historical importance. Presumably in the first half of the fifth century, the site within the area enclosed by the peribolos wall was used for a Roman military camp, mentioned by Zacharias Rhetor (*Historia ecclesiastica* 4.1). The well-planned single-story quarters for the soldiers lay adjacent to the wall, as was the rule after Valentinian I (AD. 364-378). In the southeast and southwest corners, the remains of stairs have been preserved to secure access to the boundary wall. The ruins of a small single-aisled camp church stand on the east side of the courtyard close behind the pylon. Its discovery gave some grounds for erroneously regarding the structures mentioned above in the temple as a monastery<sup>1</sup>. Justinian (528-565) richly endowed the town with buildings, mainly the residences of the magistrates and baths. Further, the city figured prominently in the conquest of the country by the Persians in 619.<sup>2</sup>

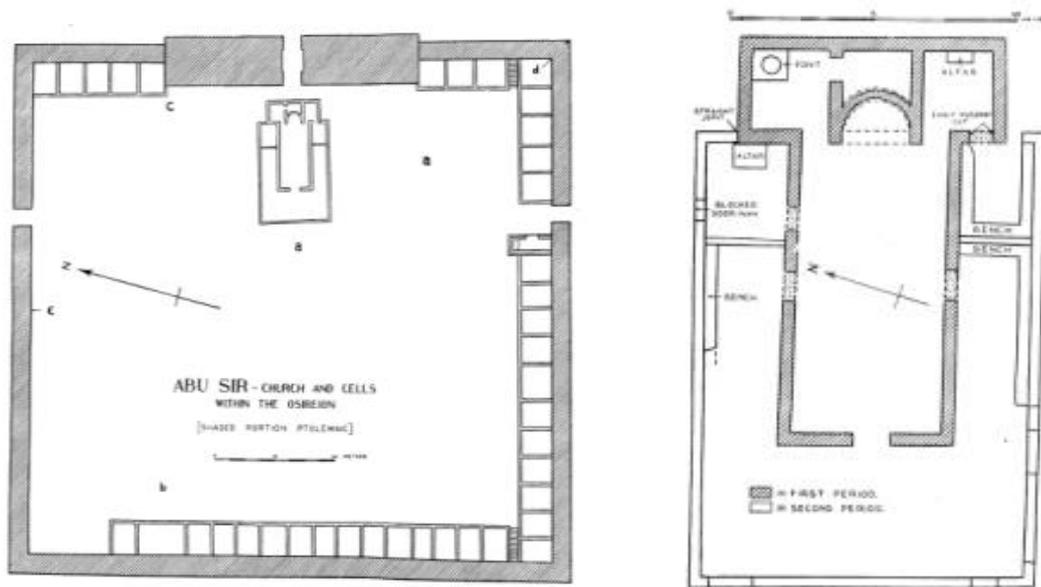


fig.17: Ground-plan of the temple and the church by Perkins.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.3.6- Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990).

The Alexandria Quartet is a tetralogy of novels by British writer Lawrence Durrell, published between 1957 and 1960 (*Justine* 1957, *Balthazar* 1958, *Mountolive* 1958, *Clea* 1960). The first three books present perspectives on a single set of events and characters in Alexandria, Egypt, before and during the Second World War. In 1998, the Modern Library ranked the Alexandria Quartet number 70 on its list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century. All the locations for the novel Alexandria Quartet are to be found in Taposiris Magna: “Justines Summer Palace” stood on Taposiris’ sea coast, and together with Nessim, she would regularly bathe in the company of Clea, Amaril and Balthazar.”

He says in his novel *Balthazar*: “*Landscape-tones: brown to bronze, steep skyline, low cloud, pearl ground with shadowed oyster and violet reflections. The lion-dust of desert: prophets’ tombs turned to zinc and copper at sunset on the ancient lake. Its huge sand-faults like watermarks from the air; green and citron giving to gunmetal, to a*

<sup>1</sup> J.B.W., Perkins, “The Monastery of Taposiris-Magna”, *BSRAA* 36, (1946): 48-53.

<sup>2</sup> P., Grossmann, “Abusir, Taposiris-Magna”, *the Coptic Encyclopedia* I, (New York, 1991): 34.

<sup>3</sup> Perkins, “The Monastery of Taposiris-Magna”: Pl.III-VI.

*single plum-dark sail, moist, palpitant: sticky-winged nymph. Taposiris is dead among its tumbling columns and seamarks vanished the Harpoon Men... Mareotis under a sky of hot lilac*". Also, he states: "We walked hand in hand across the soft sand-dunes, laboriously as insects, until we reached Taposiris with its tumble of shattered columns and capitals among the ancient weather-eroded sea-marks ... .. A faint wind blew off the sea from the Grecian archipelago. The sea was smooth as a human cheek. Only at the edges it stirred and sighed. Teose warm kisses remain there, amputated from before and after, existing in their own right like the frail transparencies of ferns or roses pressed between the covers of old books-unique and unfading as the memories they exemplified and evoked: a plume of music from a forgotten carnival-guitar echoing on in the dark streets of Alexandria for as long as silence lasts .... Justine, lying back against a fallen column at Taposiris, dark head upon the darkness of the sighing water, one curl lifted by the sea-winds, saying: "In the whole of English only one phrase means something to me, the words: 'Time Immemorial'".

In his novel *Mountolive*, he narrates the following: "Tomorrow, I said, she would have a life-experience which she must on no account miss - a man is sitting in the ruined tower at Taposiris. "You will not speak," I said, "but walk straight into his arms, your eyes closed".<sup>1</sup>

### **2.3.7- Fawzi El-Fakharani (1921-2004).**

El-Fakharani studied the lighthouse and tower of Abusir and highlighted their function. He concluded that the Tower of Abusir was not a lighthouse, a beacon, or a signal tower, and not even a watchtower. It was a mere funerary monument centred over its Ptolemaic funerary hypogeum. The tower was erected not long after the construction of its prototype, the famous Pharos of the Ptolemies. It could thus belong to the second century B.C. or early in the next century. Because of its location high on the crest of the hill and because of its form, the tower must have served as a landmark for the city of Taposiris. It, therefore, gave importance not only to the tomb of that lofty personage of Taposiris who built it, but it must also have drawn attention to the critical cemetery of Osiris.<sup>2</sup>

### **2.3.8- Peter Großmann (1933-2021).**

Grossmann was a pioneer of archaeology and Coptic architecture. He was responsible for scientific research and Christian archaeology at the DAI Kairo and began excavations at the Abu Mina site in 1969 AD. He visited the site in 1977 and afterwards made damning comments about those who had previously made contributions to research into the area. In the spring of 1981, Grossmann carried out surveys of a church located to the west of the city. It consists of a three-nave basilica, with a small side chapel and courtyards extending on both sides. The southern one is lined with several suites of rooms with two levels. To the west of the basilica is a building with several rooms, with a large apse to the south.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> L., Durrell, *the Alexandria Quartet: Justine, Balthazar, Mountolive, and Clea*, (London: Dutton, 1958-1960).

<sup>2</sup> F., El-Fakharani, "The "Lighthouse" of Abusir in Egypt", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 78, (1974): 257-72.

<sup>3</sup> Grossmann, "Abusîr, Taposiris-Magna": 34-6; Idem, "Prokopios zu Taposiris-Magna: Eine Verwechslung mit Abu Mina?", *Antiquité Tardive* 8, (2000): 165-8; Idem, "Zu dem spätrömischen Militärlager im Tempelareal von Taposiris-Magna", *BSAC* 44, (2005): 11-27.

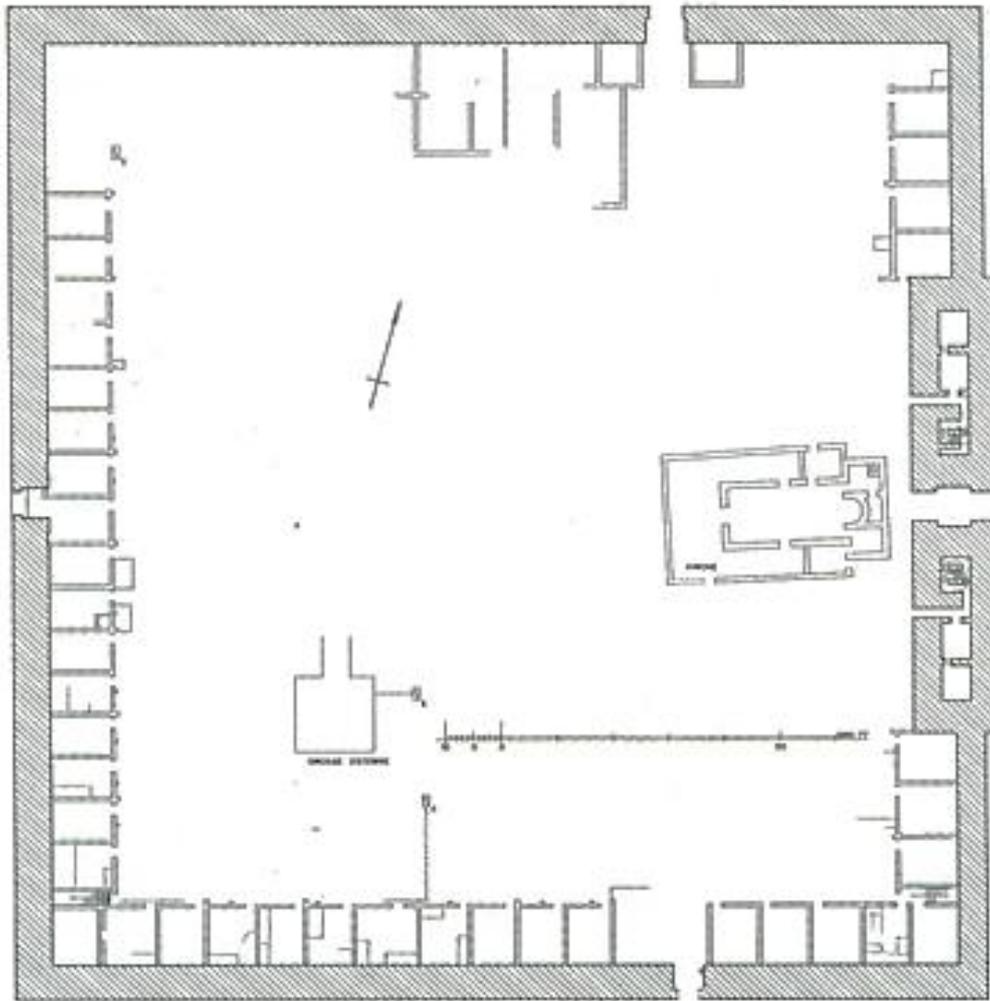


fig.18: Ground-plan of the temple by Grossmann.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.3.9- Salwa Bakr (1960-....).

In her doctoral dissertation (1997), Salwa Bakr presented an archaeological study of the city and described permanent antiquities and recent discoveries.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.3.10- Jean-Yves Empereur (1954-....).

The ex-manager director of the *Centre d'études alexandrines (CEA)* (1990-2017), He paid attention to Taposiris-Magna in his book about Alexandria. He comments: “*The ruins of Taposiris, which cover more than a square kilometer, are almost completely unexcavated, apart from some limited undertakings which have remained unpublished. The tops of the walls of buildings show through on the surface almost everywhere: it would be possible to draw up a plan of the town based on their alignments, before even starting to dig*”.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P., Grossmann, *Elephantine II: Kirche und spätantike Hausanlagen im Chnumtempelhof. Beschreibung und typologische Untersuchung*, (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1980), 24.

<sup>2</sup> S.H.M., Bakr, *Taposiris-Magna (Abusir-Mariout): Archaeological study*, Unpublished PhD diss., (Faculty of Arts-Tanta University, 1997), 1-280. (In Arabic).

<sup>3</sup> J-Y., Empereur, *Alexandrie redécouverte*, (Paris: Fayard-Stock, 1998), 222-7.

## 2.4- Twenty-first Century Writings:

Peter Grossmann: 2000, 2005.	Bérangère Redon (MFTMP): 2009-2021.
Marie-Françoise Boussac: 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2015, 2020.	Thibaud Fournet: 2009, 2011, 2013, 2017.
	Lucy Blue & Emad Khalil: 2011.
	Clément Flaux: 2011, 2012.
Győző Vörös: 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2015.	Yvonne Petrina: 2016.
	Joachim Le Bomin: 2016-.... 2019.
Mieczysław Rodziewicz: 2002.	Hervé Tronchère, Bertrand Millet, Jean-Philippe Goiran, Pierre Carbonel, Hatem Djerbi, Ruben Vera, Mena Ellassal, Yan Callot: 2014.
Lucy Blue & Sameh Ramses: 2005.	
Lise Manniche: 2008.	
Hervé Tronchère: 2010.	
Valérie Pichot: 2011, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2018.	Hervé Tronchère, Clément Flaux, Mourad El-Amouri, Marie-Christine Petitpa: 2019.
Ismail Awad: 2011, 2017, 2020	Julie Marchand: 2020.
Sarah Parcak & Gregory Mumford: 2012.	Kathleen Martinez, Stefan Pfeiffer, Daniel von Recklinghausen: 2020.
Zahi Hawass & Kathleen Martinez: 2010, 2013.	Maël Crépy: 2020, 2021.
	Daniel von Recklinghausen: 2018, 2021.
Sylvain Dhennin: 2008, 2014.	

## 3- History of Excavation and Conservation works:

The excavation missions have continued for more than a century and are still ongoing. The chronological order of missions is arranged from oldest to latest as following:

### 3.1- Annibale Evaristo Breccia (1876-1967).

From 1905 to 1907 AD, Breccia, the curator of the Greco-Roman Museum, worked in the courtyard of Abusir temple, which includes remains of a Christian church. Although he announced his work well in advance, in the end, it was never published.<sup>1</sup> Breccia also investigated the area surrounding the temple, finding various buildings, private sanctuaries and irrigation systems from various periods, such as the Ptolemaic bath, the cemetery of birds, a chapel south of the temple, and some houses. Breccia did not leave a single drawing, failed to keep records of finds, and, sadly, did not accompany these with lithographs or even photographs. He only transferred a part of what he found to the Alexandria Museum. He left the remaining finds at the site for anyone who might pass by. Moreover, it is unknown which of the beautiful pieces on exhibit at the Greek-Roman Museum in Alexandria is part of the treasure found at Taposiris. Breccia thought worthy of note. “During the excavations we have found numerous remains dating from the Ptolemaic period, but scarcely any trace of Pharaonic civilization,” He realized that the temple’s former sanctuary was destroyed in order to turn the temple into a fortress, Breccia’s report: “*At some period or other the temple has been transformed into a fortress. This is proved by numerous pieces of fluted Doric columns which at the present time form the upper rows of the north-western portion of the wall of enclosure. Here and there, quantities of worked blocks (triglyphs and metopes) may also be seen, which had once formed part of the frieze of an immense*

<sup>1</sup> E., Breccia, “Cronaca del Museo e degli scavi e ritrovamenti nel territorio di Alessandria”, *BSAA* 9, (1907): 97-8.

building. This transformation into a fortress accounts for the total disappearance of all the edifices which once existed within the enclosure wall”<sup>1</sup>

Breccia conducted excavations at the age of 29 years old. When the German scholar Thiersch published his book *Pharos* in 1909 CE, dealt with the monuments of Taposiris, Breccia lost his enthusiasm to complete his book about “Taposiris-Magna”. After his suicide, his widow dedicated his unpublished manuscripts to the University of Pisa in Italy, including his complete excavation archive in Taposiris-Magna (MSS Breccia). And several researchers later published it.<sup>2</sup>

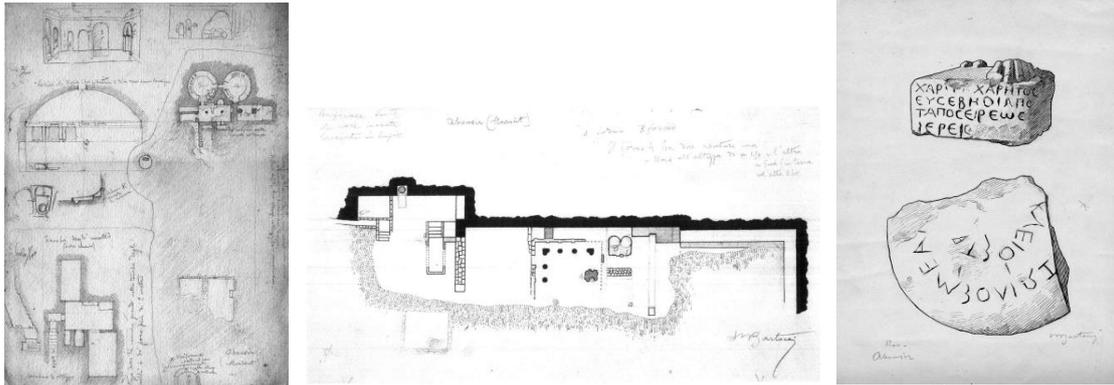


fig.19: Some drawings from Breccia unpublished archive (MSS Breccia).<sup>3</sup>

### 3.2- Achille Adriani (1905-1982).

From 1937 to 1939 AD, Adriani, the curator of the Greco-Roman Museum, completed some of Breccia's excavations in the church, the side chambers of the temple and the tombs. He carried out the consolidation of the eastern and northern walls of the temple and church, as well as the complete restoration of the tower. His three years of work were ended by financial pressures after the outbreak of the Second World War<sup>4</sup>. These circumstances caused a delay in producing Adriani's work report from 1937 to 1939, issued in 1951. His first task was to clean the inside of the temple right down to the Roman floor level. Adriani restored the temple and the stone tower using common reconstruction techniques that are questionable by today's standards. He excavated the cemetery surrounding the stone tower.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E., Breccia, *Alexandrea ad Ægyptum, guide de la ville ancienne et moderne et du Musée gréco-romain*, (Bergamo: Istituto d'Arti Grafiche, 1914), 121-30, fig.32; Idem, *A Guide To The Ancient*, 337-44.

<sup>2</sup> M.C., Betrò, “Evaristo Breccia inedito”, *Passato e presente di una disciplina, Atti del convegno Ippolito Rosellini*. Pisa, 30-31 maggio 1982, (Pisa: Giardini, 1982): 45-59; L., Caramatti, *Annibale Evaristo Breccia. Documenti sugli scavi e sul Museo greco-romano di Alessandria negli archivi egittologici dell'ateneo pisano*, tesi di laurea, (Università de Pise, 1994); F., Silvano, “L'Archivio Evaristo Breccia. Collezioni Egittologiche dell'Università di Pisa”, *Annibale Evaristo Breccia in Egitto, Mostra documentaria*, II, Minutoli, D., (ed.), (Cairo: Istituto italiano di cultura, 2003): 73-90.

<sup>3</sup> Vörös, *Taposiris-Magna* 2, 37-8.

<sup>4</sup> A., Adriani, “Abousir (Mareotide). Fouilles du Service des Antiquités”, *CdE* 13/25 (1938): 74-7.

<sup>5</sup> A., Adriani, “Travaux des fouilles et de restaurations dans la région d'Abousir”, *AMGR* III 1940-1950, (1952): 129-39, Pl.XLVII-LII.

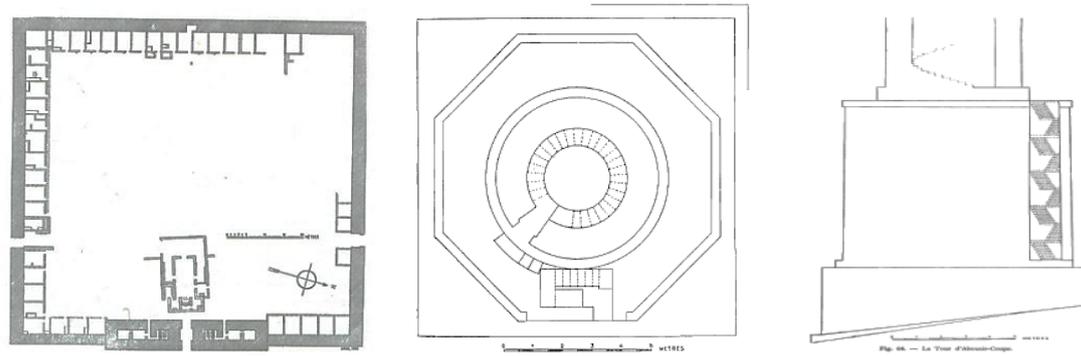


fig.20: Adriani's design of the temple and tower ground plan.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.3- Jasper Yeates Brinton (1878-1973).

Brinton was Chief Justice of the Judicial Court of Alexandria and the President of the Royal Archaeological Society of Alexandria. He conducted a restoration program for the temple for three years from 1946 to 1948, spending about 7500 Egyptian pounds (a considerable amount at the time with support from the municipality and the general education administration) to save the temple and make it a destination for Alexandrian visitors and foreign tourists. Under the supervision of engineer Kamal Al-Malakh, he worked on the eastern part of the northern wall, the western part of the southern wall, and the temple pylon, in addition to a rest area built for visitors on the site.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.4- Rashed Nouweir.

The Egyptian Antiquities Authority mission worked at the site from 1952 to 1961 AD. The continuation of the work made it possible to uncover around forty tombs dug into the rock, where Pharaonic architectural elements mingled with Greek orders. Most of these tombs have an atrium and loculi, thus grouping a large number of burials. Furthermore, restoration work continued at the site.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.5- Edward Ochsenschlager (1932-.....).

From 7 July 7 to 19 August 1975, the Brooklyn Museum supported an Expedition of the Archaeological Research Institute of Brooklyn College under the auspices of the American Research Center in Egypt. The excavation was limited to the port's Mareotis Lake side. Two short articles about their work were published. Edward said at the end of his article: *"The initial session has furnished abundant proof of the wealth of information which could be recovered from Taposiris-Magna. Full-scale excavations are planned to commence in the near future"*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adriani, "Travaux des fouilles": Pl.XLVII-LII.

<sup>2</sup> J.Y., Brinton, "Addendum: au Rapport présenté par le Président à l'Assemblée, le 30 Avril 1947, ence qui concerne la restauration du Temple d'Abousir", *BSRAA* 37, (1948): 102-3; Idem, "Restoration of the Temple of Abusir", *Archaeology* 1, (1948): 186-7; J., Leclant, "Compte rendu des fouilles et travaux menés en Égypte durant les campagnes 1948-1950. II", *Or* 19, (1950): 495, Tab.LXII, fig.14.

<sup>3</sup> J., Leclant, "Fouilles et travaux en Égypte, 1952-1953", *Or* 23, (1954): 75; R., Nouweir, "Les fouilles dans la zone d'Abousir", *La revue du Caire* XXXIII, 175, (1955): 66-8.

<sup>4</sup> E.L., Ochsenschlager, "Taposiris-Magna: 1975 Season", *Acts First International Congress of Egyptology (ICE)* Cairo, October 2-10, 1976, W.F., Reineke, (ed.), (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1979): 503-6; Idem, "Taposiris-Magna": 927-9.

### 3.6- Faisal El-Ashmawi (1940-2017).

From 1980 to 1982, the Egyptian Antiquities Organization conducted a mission in the Eastern Cemeteries,<sup>1</sup> but the findings were not published.

### 3.7- Ezzat Al-Hamamy (1954-....).

The Egyptian Antiquities Organization carried out a mission in the cemetery region between 1982 and 1984, but the findings were not published.

### 3.8- Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA).

From 1995 to 1997, the SCA performed a restoration work on the outer temple walls and rebuilt many parts as they were to their original state.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.9- Győző Vörös (1972-....).

From 1998 to 2004, a Hungarian mission (Pázmány Péter Catholic University) worked inside and in front of the temple and the tower to uncover its foundations. The mission issued the discoveries in two books and many articles. The mission's objectives are to prepare a complete architectural description of the 'temple and the stone tower and methodological graphic and photographic documentation of Taposiris-Magna as an archaeological site. The most critical finding is that the precise location of the original Hellenistic sanctuary in the temple court was successfully localized.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.10- Marie-Françoise Boussac (1949-....).

From 1998 to 2018, the Mission française de Taposiris Magna et Plinthe (MFTMP) from CNRS/Université de Lyon, with the primary support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the IFAO, led by Marie-Françoise Boussac has explored the southern part of the Abusir site at the baths, the Plantin, and Kom El-Nogous. Its members published several research papers and books about the results of their discoveries. From 1998 to 2003, French archaeologists carried out a general mapping of the entire area in the years 2003 and 2005, supplemented by geophysical surveys. Since 2000, the city has been excavated section by section, starting with the lowest part towards Lake Mareotis,

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<sup>1</sup> J., Leclant, "Fouilles et travaux en Égypte et au Soudan, 1982-1983", *Or* 53, (1984): 351.

<sup>2</sup> D., Elhami, "Taposiris-Magna, la grandeur d'une cité retrouvée", *Al-Ahram Hebdo*, 18-24 Novembre, (Le Caire, 1998): 29.

<sup>3</sup> G., Vörös, *Taposiris-Magna I: 1998-200, Port of Isis, Hungarian excavations at Alexandria*, (Budapest: Egypt Excavation Society of Hungary, 2001); Idem, "The Taposiris-Magna Mosaic in the Museum of Palestrina", *Egyptian Museum Collections around the World II, Studies for the Centennial of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo*, M., Eldamaty, & M., Trad, (eds.), (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002): 1209-20; Idem, "The Ancient heritage of Taposiris-Magna in Italy: Palestrina, Fiesole, Rome", *Faraoni Come dei Tolemei come Faraoni, Atti del V Congresso Internazionale Italo- Egiziano*, N., Bonacasa, (et al.) (eds.), Torino, Archivio di stato, 8-12 dicembre 2001, (Torino-Palermo: Museo Egizio di Torino, 2003): 271-305; Idem, "Taposiris-Magna-Bronze dishes from Hungarian excavations in Alexandria", *Hungarian Applied Arts* 2, (2005): 2-3; Idem, *Egyptian temple architecture: 100 years of Hungarian excavations in Egypt, 1907-2007*, (Budapest: Kairosz Press, 2007), 96-115; Idem, "The temple treasures of Taposiris-Magna", *Egyptian Archaeology* 36, (2010): 15-7; Idem, "Egyptian Temple Architecture in the Light of the Hungarian Excavations in Egypt 1907-2007", *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists, University of the Aegean, Rhodes, 22-29 May 2008*, P., Kousoulis, & N., Lazaridis, (eds), I, (Leuven-Paris-Bristol: OLA 241, 2015): 501-20; Y., Petrina, "Das spätantike Schätzchen von Taposiris-Magna (Ägypten)", *Between Byzantium and the Steppe, Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honour of Csanád Bálint on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, Á., Bolkó, (et al.) (eds.), (Budapest: Hungarian, 2016): 183-94.

especially the port area. In 2003, the area below the temple, the so-called "Breccia terrace" after Breccia, who dug there in 1905, was tackled simultaneously.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.11- Bérangère Redon (1977-....).

From 2018 till now, the French Mission (*MFTMP*) of Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire (*IFAO*) led by Bérangère Redon has been working south of the site from the baths to the port and the Plantinian tombs and Kom el-Nogous. Its scientific members have published several articles on the findings of their recent discoveries.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.12- SCA & Universidad Católica de Santo Domingo.

The Joint Mission of the SCA (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities) with the Universidad Católica de Santo Domingo worked inside and around the Abusir temple, tombs, and the tower. From 2005 to 2011, Zahi Hawass and Attia Radwan worked there with Kathleen Martinez<sup>3</sup>. In 2013, Mohamed Abd El-Megied and Ahmed Shukry worked there with Kathleen Martinez. From 2014 until now, Mohamed Nabil and Kathleen Martinez worked there. The last mission was headed by Khadija Abdel-Qader and then, in 2022, by Mohammed Nabil.<sup>4</sup>

## 4- Conclusion:

By displaying the historical background of excavation missions and ancient records of the site Taposiris-Magna (Abusir-Mariout), it has seemingly enjoyed enormous interest all over the ages. It has been much appreciated and has become an insightful region contributing to re-identifying ancient Egyptian history. This significance revealed the reason behind continuing excavations at the site.

Taposiris-Magna received tremendous attention from ancient historians, classical writers, modern travellers, nineteenth and twentieth-century historians, and early archaeologists. In addition, its unique fixed antiquities have formed a valuable mark on the site and those that have yet to be discovered.

The site still needs more development. Excavation and restoration work for the unearthed archaeological items, as well as developing and establishing an open museum and preparing it for tourist visits as one of the important cultural sites in the western Delta, are needed.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.taposiris.com](http://www.taposiris.com); <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/recherche/archeologie/taposiris-magna-plinthe/> (7-1-2024).

<sup>2</sup> <https://taposiris.hypotheses.org/>; <https://archeologie.culture.gouv.fr/monde/fr/plinthe-et-taposiris-magna>. (7-1-2024).

<sup>3</sup> Z., Hawass, "Taposiris", *Cleopatra: The Search for the Last Queen of Egypt*, F., Goddio, & Z., Hawass, (eds.), (Washington, 2010): 200-7; Z., Hawass, & K., Martinez, "Preliminary Report on the Excavations at Taposiris-Magna: 2005-2006", *Tuna el-Gebel. 4, Kleine Götter - Grosse Götter: Festschrift für Dieter Kessler zum 65. Geburtstag*, M.C., Flossmann, (et al.) (Hrsg.), (Vaterstetten, 2013): 235-51; Sh.M., Abd El-Moniem, "Amphorae and trade in Taposiris-Magna", *The Delta survey workshop: proceedings from conferences held in Alexandria (2017) and Mansoura (2019)*, A., Wahby & P., Wilson, (eds.), (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2022): 23-31.

<sup>4</sup> D., Recklinghausen, *Die Philensis-Dekrete: Untersuchungen über zwei Synodaldekrete aus der Zeit Ptolemaios' V. und ihre geschichtliche und religiöse Bedeutung*, I-II, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018), I, 17-8, II, 64 85; Martinez, "New evidence": 1001-22; D., Recklinghausen, & K., Martinez, "A new version of "Philensis I" from Taposiris-Magna", *Constructing, remaking, and dismantling sacred landscapes in Lower Egypt: late Dynastic - early Medieval period*, D., Robinson, & F., Goddio, (eds.), (Oxford, Oxford Centre for Maritime Archaeology, 2021): 153-73.

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