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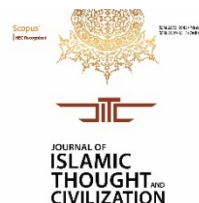
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# **Alexandria, the Threshold of Egypt; A Comparative Study on Volney and Jabarti's Idea of Alexandria in the Late 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

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## **Abstract**

Alexandria is the second-largest city in Egypt; this city is the threshold of Egypt and the first place by the sea where travelers encounter and create an idea of Egypt in their minds. Many western travelers, such as Hartmann Schedel, André Thevet, Jacob Peeters, Charles Perry, Volney, Dumont, and others have visited Alexandria and wrote reports on the City past and present, through which their opinions of the city can be accessed. Without a doubt, looking at Alexandria from a traveler's point of opinion differs from the opinions of a person who has lived there and observed the city from the inside. The question is how each of these two perspectives encounters the city. What questions have each of them asked and what answers have they given? And do these questions and answers come from their social and cultural background? Can a comparison of these two opinions provide a picture of the city to help better understand its history? It seems that the questions and answers of these observers come from their social backgrounds. At the same time Volney (1757-1820) lived in France, Abdul Rahman bin Hassan al-Jabarti (1825-1753) lived in Egypt. In this study, using an asymmetric macro-comparison method, we have attempted to evaluate the information in Volney's travelogue and Jabarti's "Ajāeb-al Asār" based on their perspective of the inside (Jabarti) and outside (Volney) of Alexandria. In his introduction to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Alexandria, Volney seems to be very attached to the ideas from the French society, At the same time, Jabarti did not pay much attention to the question of Alexandria's

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urbanization and focused more on those who went to the city and left it. He laid the focus on the political and military situation of the city.

**Keywords:** Alexandria, Volney, Jabarti, Egyptology, Travelogue, Travel Theory

### Introduction

Egypt was already known to Europeans in the late 18th century. Many travelers, even since ancient Greece and Rome, had published several reports of their travels in Egypt. Several popular European publications made paintings of Egypt's most extraordinary monuments available to the wealthy and interested people. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, travelogues were considered as essential documents for history and science; for instance, travelogues written by Benoit de Maillet, Paul Lucas, Claude Sicard, Richard Pococke, Frederik Ludwig Norden, James Bruce, Richard Dalton and Volney.<sup>1</sup> Travelogues, especially from the Renaissance onwards, were one of the essential sources for Europeans to learn about the East, which gradually increased significantly, especially from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. One of the travelogues in this century is a travel report by Constantin-François Chasseboeuf Volney about his trip to Egypt and the Levant (1783-1785). In this travelogue, especially the part in Egypt, he mainly provides important insights into various country areas of the country, such as the rulers of Egypt, climate, business, people's livelihoods, and so on. At the same time Volney (1757-1820) lived in France, Abdul Rahman bin Hassan al-Jabarti (1753-1825) was living in Egypt. He was an Egyptian historian at the time of the French campaign in Egypt. following Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, after the formation of the "Egyptian Court," Napoleon appointed him a member of this association, which included nine of Egypt's elders. At this position, Jabarti opposed specific French manners like how French women dressed, their disregard for Muslims religious values, disrespecting the Al-Azhar Mosque and most importantly, banning the Hajj pilgrimed. He even once called some French troops "infidels."<sup>2</sup> However, he sometimes praised some of their actions, including establishing libraries, associations, factories, the recruitment of scientists and their scientific activities, the ordering of administrative and judicial affairs and the quarantine of Egypt during the outbreak of the plague.<sup>3</sup>

Alexandria is a major harbor city and Egypt's second-largest city. The city is named after Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), the liberator of Egyptians and their

<sup>1</sup>A. Siliotti, *The Discovery of Ancient Egypt*, (Edison, NJ: Chartwell Books, 1998), 37-79.

<sup>2</sup>A. Al-Jabarti, *Ajāeb-al Asār fī l-Tarājim wa-l-Akhhbār*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar-al Fars), 231.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, 347.

gods from the Persian occupation<sup>4</sup> who ordered to build the city after his conquest in Egypt. During the Ptolemaic era, this city was the capital of Egypt and was known as the largest city in the Greek world. The Romans annexed Alexandria to their territory in 80 BC and rebuilt it, but religious freedom did not emerge until 313 AD.<sup>5</sup> After the death of Theodosius I (347-395 AD), the Roman Empire was divided into two eastern (Byzantine) and western parts; Egypt and Alexandria remained a part of the east part. With the rise of Islam and the military confrontation of Arabs with the Byzantine Empire, Muslims entered Egypt and the conquest of Alexandria occurred based on various narratives between 18 and 25 AH (639-646 AD).<sup>6</sup> With the arrival of Muslims, Jews and Copts gained more religious freedom. During the Islamic period, Alexandria had more commercial developments and was a destination for merchants from the northern Mediterranean. With Sultan Salim's domination over Egypt in 923 AH/1517 AD, Alexandria became a port to provide for the needs of Ottoman Empire. The City played a prominent role in Napoleon's military campaign in Egypt in 1798 AD. French troops invaded the city on July 2, 1798 and stayed there until 1801. On March 21, 1801, the British had a significant victory over the French and thus captured the city. Mohammed Ali Pasha, Ottoman governor of Egypt, began rebuilding the city around 1810, and by 1850 Alexandria had restored its former glory. Egypt continued trying to rise to the level of European countries, and by the early twentieth century, Alexandria had become a home for writers and poets.

It's understood that looking at this city from outside, as a traveler's point of opinion, and looking at it from the inside, as someone who has lived there, are different from each other. still, the critical and challenging issue is how each of these perspectives encounters the city. What kind of questions each of them proposes and how do they answer? Do these questions and answers come from their social and cultural background? And can we have a better understanding of the city, if we put these two perspectives and ideas together?

<sup>4</sup>J. Fournet, "Persians in Egypt", *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History* (1<sup>st</sup> Ed.), (Cairo: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2013).

<sup>5</sup>A. F. Walls, "Alexandria and Early Christianity: Egypt," *Encyclopedia of African History*, Vol.1 (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 46.

<sup>6</sup>Ibn Abdul-Hakam, *Fotuh-e Misr wa-l-Maghreb* (Cairo: RA Press, 1994), 97-98; J. Ibn Taghribirdi, *Al-Nujum al-Zāhirah fī Muluk Misr wa-al-Qāhirah*, Vizārat el-Saghāfah Wa-L-Ershād al-Qumi, Vol.1 (Egypt: Dār al-Kutub, 1997),12; T. Al-Maqrizi, *Al-Mawā'iz wa-al-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khitat wa-al-āthār*, Vol.1, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub el-Elmiah, 1997), 291.

Many types of research have been done on travelogues and travelers' opinions on various subjects such as religious life, local customs, people's morals, etc.<sup>7</sup> In some of these studies, the researcher has attempted to collect the data related to particular case from one or several travelogues and provide analysis or idea about the issue.<sup>8</sup> Others, while considering the chronology of travelogues, have studied the development of the subject and presented a history of it from the traveler's point of opinion.<sup>9</sup> Some Attempts have been made to reconcile the information in travelogues with some historical and geographical texts. Without a doubt, the first or most important source of many of these studies has been these travel reports. However, what has not been mentioned in the conducted pieces of research is the intellectual and cultural backgrounds of travelers and travelogue writers, which can be used to understand their propositions in terms of their travel theory and to use their information to research the history of various subjects and possibilities.

In this study, using an asymmetric macro-comparison method, we have attempted to analyze the information of two texts, Volney's travelogue and Jabarti's "Ajāeb-al Asār ", about the city of Alexandria. In this study method, samples that do not belong to a large, homogeneous structure and we cannot find any substantial similarities between their constituents, will be evaluated based on their specific composition and function. In addition, the different discourses that each of the authors have come up with should not be overlooked.

## 2. A Brief Look at Volney's Life

French philosopher Volney<sup>10</sup> was an advocate of the abolition of slavery, a historian, an orientalist, and a politician. Initially, he had his father's family name, but later, combined the first part of his first name with the last part of his last name, and gave himself Volney. He was born in a noble family in Craon, France. Volney was at first interested in medicine and law. However, he began to study law, but did not want to become a lawyer, which was commonly an essential occupation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He then studied classical languages and his work on the *History of Herodotus* led him to the Academy of Inscriptions and Ancient Languages of

<sup>7</sup>In this regard and for accessing research, see: Iran Research Institute for Information Science and Technology (Iran doc.), <https://irandoc.ac.ir/>.

<sup>8</sup>e.g., S. Tayebi, "A Comparative Analysis of the Social life in Shiraz during the Qajar Era based on Foreign Travelogues (1795-1847)," Master diss., (Al-Zahra University, 2012).

<sup>9</sup>E.g., K. Rahmani, "Representing the Culture and People of Iran in the Works of European Travel Writers (France, England, Germany) from the Early Qajar Period to the Constitutional Revolution," Masters diss., (Tarbiat Modares University, 2011).

<sup>10</sup>Constantin-François Volney, (1757-1820).

France and in close circles with Claude Adrien Helvétius (1715-1771). Afterward, Volney became friends with Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis, Nicolas de Condorcet and Benjamin Franklin; Franklin's open-mindedness, especially in religious beliefs, had a profound effect on him.<sup>11</sup>

In the mid-eighteenth century, Volney decided to travel to the East, given the troubled political situation of Ottoman Empire and perhaps other factors. With the six thousand pounds he inherited from his father, he traveled to Egypt and Syria, countries that were the cradles of religious thought at the time. He had been preparing for the trip for a year and learned the Arabic at the Royal College from Michel-Ange-André Le Roux Deshauterayes (1724-1795).<sup>12</sup> Before his trip, Volney had read the twelfth volume of the book, "Origin of all Religions or Universal Religion,"<sup>13</sup> but he did not mention it in his travelogue despite using it.<sup>14</sup> He finally began his journey in the final months of 1782, with a backpack, a gun on his shoulder, and six thousand pounds of gold hidden in his belt. He spent about seven months in Ottoman Egypt and also lived in Syria, Lebanon and present-day Palestine for two years to learn the Arabic language and culture.

After returning to France in 1785, he published his notes with the title *Travels Through Syria and Egypt, in the Years 1783, 1784, And 1785*<sup>15</sup> in 1787. In 1788 he also published a book entitled *Considerations on the Battle of Turks and Russians*.<sup>16</sup> After the French Revolution, he became a member of the "House of Commons" and the "National Constituent Assembly.". In 1791 he published an article in philosophy of history entitled, "Ruins: Or, Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires,"<sup>17</sup> that contains a prospect that foretold the ultimate unification of all religions. which the recognition of the common truth is fundamental to all of them.

<sup>11</sup>H. Janin, *Four Paths to Jerusalem: Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Secular Pilgrimages, 1000 BCE to 2001 CE* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2002), 158-162.

<sup>12</sup>F. Pouillon, *Dictionnaire des orientalistes de langue française [Dictionary of French Speaking Orientalists]*, Karthala Ed., (2008), p. 969).

<sup>13</sup>Origine de tous les cultes, ou Religion universelle (Origin of all Cults or Universal Religion).

<sup>14</sup>E. P. Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 199.

<sup>15</sup>*Voyage en Syrie Et en Égypte Pendant Les Années 1783, 1784 Et 1785* [Travel top Syria and Egypt during the years 1783, 1784 and 1785].

<sup>16</sup>*Considérations sur la guerre des Turcs et de la Russie* [Considerations on the war of the Turks and Russia].

<sup>17</sup>*Les Ruines, ou Méditations sur les Révolutions des Empires* [The Ruins or Meditations on the Revolutions of Empires].

Volney tried to enforce his political and economic opinions in Corsica Island, where he bought a piece of land in 1792 and cultivated various crops. Volney was imprisoned during the Jacobin group's victory but survived Guillotine. He was also a history teacher at the newly established "École Normale Supérieure" School.

In 1795 he joined the French Academy.<sup>18</sup> In the same year, he began his oriental studies with the help of Alexander Hamilton, the English linguist. He also traveled to the United States at the end of that year, where he was charged with espionage for France by the government of John Adams; in 1797 he was sent back to France. Volney published the results of his trip in 1803 in the book *Opinion of the Climate and Soil of the United States of America*. He died in Paris and was buried in the Père Lachaise Cemetery.

### 3. A Brief Look at Jabarti's Life

Abdul Rahman bin Hassan bin Ibrahim Zaylayi Aghili Jabarti Hanafi was born in 1167 AH / 1753 AD in Cairo.<sup>19</sup> As Jabarti mentions in *Ajāeb-al Asār*, his ancestors were the Muslims from the Jabart area of Abyssinia, also known as Zayla.<sup>20</sup> A group of them emigrated to Egypt and settled in Al-Azhar.<sup>21</sup>

His father, Hassan Jabarti, was unlike his ancestors a prominent researcher and taught mathematics, geometry, algebra, astronomy, and theology in Al-Azhar.<sup>22</sup> Sheikh Hassan Jabarti had close ties with the Mamluk and Ottoman elders of Egypt, and some of his disciples were in military. He was well-known among Egyptian scholars. This paved the way for Abdul Rahman to reach his intellectual base and also enabled Abdul Rahman to become familiar with the detail of government. This acquaintance had a significant impact on historical researches of Abdul Rahman Jabarti.<sup>23</sup> Abdul Rahman's father died in 1188 AH/1774 AD and left a tremendous fortune and an excellent library for his only child. Also, through his father, Abdul Rahman became friends with some of the politicians and scholars of the time in Egypt.

Napoleon formed two tribunals to manage Egyptian affairs; in none of them Jabarti was a member, but in the third tribunal, which was founded by General

<sup>18</sup>Académie Française [French Academy].

<sup>19</sup>A. Philip, *Al-Jabarti, Ajāeb-al Asār fī l-Tarājim wa-l-Akhbār*, Vol.1 (Beirut: Dar-al Fars, 2009), 339.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 604.

<sup>21</sup>H. A. R. Gibb, *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill. 1960–2009), 2/355.

<sup>22</sup>S. Ahmed, "A Perspective of the Arab-Islamic Political Philosophy of the 18th and 19th Centuries," Ph.D. Diss., (Vienna: University of Vienna, 2010), 66.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 66-67.

Menou<sup>24</sup>, commander of the French in 1215 AH/1800 AD, he was elected as one of the religious elders of Egypt. During the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha (1220 to 1265 AH/1805 to 1848 AD), Jabarti resigned due to some disagreements with him and the death of his son and loss of his eyesight. He eventually died in 1240 AH/1825.

Some of Jabarti's prominent works in the field of history were '*Be modate-l-Francis be mesr*,<sup>25</sup> *Mazhar-al-Taqdis be-Zahāb al-Dowlat-el-Francis*<sup>26</sup> and *Ajāeb-al Asār fi l-Tarājim wa-l-Akhhbār*.<sup>27</sup> Jabarti has mentioned that when writing *Ajāeb-al Asār*, he had particular interest in collecting news and stories from elders and eminent figures, especially in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>28</sup> and later, tried to complete them at the request of Sheikh Murādi.<sup>29</sup> In the preface, he has named some of his historical sources, such as '*The History of Al-Tabari*', 'Al-Masudi', 'Ibn al-Athir', 'Ibn al-Jawzi', 'Ibn Khallikan' etc.<sup>30</sup> Jabarti has set the numeric style in his book chronologically to make it easy for researchers to refer to it.<sup>31</sup> In his words about the events of the late 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, which he had witnessed himself, he wrote everything in detail. The pieces are either monthly or daily, sometimes even divided into several parts of the day, as he reported the events of the morning, noon and night separately.

The chronicle by al-Jabarti entitled *Ajāeb-al Asār fi l-Tarājim wa-l-Akhhbār* is a very important and valuable source for the history of Egypt in general and the history of the French occupation in particular. Al-Jabarti's work contains, besides the chronicle narrative, a large number of biographies and obituaries of outstanding historical figures. The chronicle also includes many proverbs, poems and documents, thereby rendering the text very heterogeneous. Most of the third volume is devoted to the French occupation of Egypt, from the arrival of the

<sup>24</sup>Jacques François Menou (1750-1810).

<sup>25</sup>The History of the Period of the French Occupation in Egypt.

<sup>26</sup>Demonstration of Piety in the Demise of French Society; This account was significant in the literary world, as it was among the first accounts of an Arab analyzing the West, as opposed to the conventional Western study of the East. See: Keuss, *Global Tides*, (2021), 2.

<sup>27</sup>The Marvelous Compositions of Biographies and Events.

<sup>28</sup>A. Al-Jabarti, *Ajāeb-al Asār fi l-Tarājim wa-l-Akhhbār*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar-al Fars), 5.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, 355.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, 5-10.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, 2.



invaders to their evacuation to France. Since the author himself was in Cairo for the whole of the occupation, the events from this time are described in detail.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4. The Common Political Situation of Volney and Jabarti

Both Volney and Jabarti came from families with a high social and scientific status in their community; this enabled them to get acquainted with reputable and knowledgeable individuals in the community and keep them closely informed of political and social events and developments. It also led them to pay particular attention to the individuals of the community in question, i.e., Egypt, when writing their mentioned works. Also, because of the financial power of their fathers, they both inherited a considerable fortune and spent that wealth on scientific purposes.

Both writers, at one point in the history of their societies, have looked at a familiar subject and wrote about it; on the one hand, ambitious rulers had come into power, and on the other hand, the world was experiencing an excellent transformation on both sides of the Mediterranean. Despite Volney's initial association with Napoleon and Jabarti's with Mohammed Ali Pasha, they continued to devote themselves to focusing on scholarly activities and writing valuable works in seclusion because of disagreements with some of their policies.

##### 4.1 Alexandria from Volney's Point of Opinion

“As I traveled through Alexandria, I remembered Volney's descriptions of this city; the shapes, colors, senses, everything was painted exactly like reality; a few months later, I read the same pages of Volney's book again and felt like I was back in Alexandria again. If Volney had described all of Egypt in this way, no one would have found it necessary to draw more paintings.”<sup>33</sup> Denon's description of Volney's travelogue, after accompanying Napoleon during his campaign in Egypt, illustrates the accuracy of Volney's report on a months-long journey, to Egypt. Volney is one of the last French observers to visit the Near East before the French Revolution. He wrote for European travelers who were traveling to the East after him: “What stands out... we find almost all of their customs in contrast to our traditions; it can be said that a project is designed to create a lot of contradictions between Asian and European people.”<sup>34</sup> Volney (the narrator) does not hesitate to draw a line between the two types of humans, Egyptian and the French, and expresses some ideas that lead to an understanding of the difference between the two. From the

<sup>32</sup>Prusskaya, *Napoleonica. La Revue*, Vol. 24, no. 3 (2015): 48.

<sup>33</sup>D. Denon, *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte, Pendant les Campagnes du Général Bonaparte*, (Paris: P. Didot Press, 1802), 17.

<sup>34</sup>Volney (Paris: Nabu Press, 2010), 419.

beginning, he has been consciously trying to remind the readers of the distance between himself and the other what he says about the city is considered to be about Alexandria and is validated by the reader's minds.<sup>35</sup>

From the first lines of the travelogue, Volney acquaints the reader with his general opinion of what he sees and what he writes; "It is in vain to read books to learn about customs and traditions of the nations."<sup>36</sup> Mentioning this phrase at the beginning of his travelogue reveals his approach; Volney has always regarded textual and symbolic representations as suspicious and misleading, which can apply to him and his book. He believes man as a creature whose thoughts are influenced by his peripheral environment and formed by encounters with his surroundings; Volney claims to have rationality that expresses what he has seen and heard in a clear and pure way.<sup>37</sup> Rationality emerges from the "sight window"; having a close-up opinion changes everything. Volney has spoken of a phenomenon we now know as "cultural shock", a situation that one faces in new environment;<sup>38</sup> "There is always a gap between the influence of what one has read and what he has felt. The ideas that make the sounds are different in the paintings and even in the colors. Ideas fade quickly; we are aware of this and have experienced it, especially if the depicted objects are unfamiliar to us."<sup>39</sup> The mind is constantly challenged between two ideas, previously created ideas and new ones and created by the "sight window". These lapses of the imagination lead to creating new idea to match the previous ideas. The only possibility for the individual is that they gain experience of the environment and combines their observations with what others have said, and gains a general perspective.

<sup>35</sup>Moussa Sarga, (France: ENS Press, 2013), 168.

<sup>36</sup>C'EST en vain que l'on se prépare, par la lecture des livres, au spectacle des usages et des mœurs des nations [it is in vain that one prepares oneself, by reading books, for the spectacle of the customs and customs of nations]; Volney, *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie, Pendant les Années 1783, 1784 et 1785, Suivi de Considérations Sur la Guerre des Russes et des Turks* [Followed by Considerations on the War of the Russians and the Turks], vol. 1 (1789), 1.

<sup>37</sup>M. Sarga 'Orientalisme et idéologie: La représentation d'Alexandrie chez Volney et Denon, in *Le Moment idéologique*, Littérature et sciences de l'homme [Orientalism and Ideology: The Representation of Alexandria in Volney and Denon, in *The Ideological Moment, Literature and Human Sciences*], (2013), 165.

<sup>38</sup>J. Macionis, L. Gerber, "Sociology": *Chapter 3 - Culture*, 7th ed. (Toronto: Pearson Canada Inc, 2010), 54.

<sup>39</sup>Volney, *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie, Pendant les Années 1783, 1784 et 1785, Suivi de Considérations Sur la Guerre des Russes et des Turks*, Vol. 1, 3.

Europeans have an idea of the East by reading books about it, and as soon as they enter these lands, those ideas crumble. But it still amazes them; "Why?" As soon as they arrive at their accommodation place, they ask themselves: "Why is everything the way it is supposed to be?" Volney uses a reverse approach to fill in the gaps of previous travelogues and to fix their deficiencies, mainly what Savary has published and has been consistently accused of identifying and introducing the East through the tales of Thousand and One Nights. An example of this can be seen in his first encounter with Alexandria. There is a dual idea of Alexandria that has been created for travelers. Travelers may get confused about Alexandria for two reasons: first, the name of the city, which is reminiscent of a magnificent conqueror, something that depends on ideas;<sup>40</sup> and the other is their distance from the city at sea, reinforced by western literary stereotypes.<sup>41</sup> Alexandria is a shred of evidence and an example of the collapse of Ottoman Empire, which had been compared to a half-dead body by Choiseul-Gouffier<sup>42</sup> a few years earlier. The description of Alexandria is therefore linked to the state of Ottoman empire. On the other hand, the desire for Europeans to see the ruins is because such things are rare there (France), and this is again the contrast of development and devastation depicted by Volney. Old ruins attract people; in Alexandria, he has constantly been surrounded by lands full of ancient ruins. He describes the dilapidated and crumbling state of the stones of these walls, which are covered with potassium nitrate, referring to the ancient site of Alexandria and its towers. He describes the feeling of sadness when seeing these landscapes because it reminds him of a history, he had read many years ago. Volney has tried not to repeat the previous statements, especially about the archaeological sites of Alexandria, and his sharp and critical tone shows that he has had many studies on Egypt before he traveled to this country. He mentions those such as Norden,<sup>43</sup> Pococke,<sup>44</sup> Niebuhr,<sup>45</sup> and

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid, 1-17.

<sup>41</sup>For more information of the image of Alexandria in European thought and literature, see: P. Briant, "Alexander the Great and the Enlightenment: William Robertson (1721-1793), the Empire and the road to India," *Cromohs*, 10 (2005), 1-9; P. Briant, *The First European. A History of Alexander in the Age of Empire*, translated by N. Elliott (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017); P. Briant, *Alexandre: Exégèse des lieux communs*, Paris: Gallimard, 2016; B. Butler, *Return to Alexandria: An Ethnography of Cultural Heritage Revivalism and Museum Memory*, (Left Coast Press, 2007).

<sup>42</sup>Marie-Gabriel-Florent-Auguste de Choiseul-Gouffier (1752-1817).

<sup>43</sup>Fredric Louis Norden (1708-1742).

<sup>44</sup>Richard Pococke (1704-1765).

<sup>45</sup>Carsten Niebuhr (1733-1815).

Savary<sup>46</sup> who had given information about Egypt before him; Cleopatra's bath, the two pyramids, the Obelisk, the crypts, the tanks, the erroneously named Pompey's Pillar, and other monuments and inscriptions that are fading; a lonely, sturdy, massive pillar in an open environment raises respect and admiration.

Alexandria has become an important trading place in its new state; he mentions Alexandria's prominence and the importance of its coast in trading; all Egyptian goods get transferred from this city into the Mediterranean, except for the Damietta rice.<sup>47</sup> Europeans have offices in the city<sup>48</sup> Where goods are exchanged; every day, ships from Marseilles, Livorno, Venice and Ragusa can be seen there.<sup>49</sup> He points out how the ships were positioned in an explicitly for Europeans. Volney speaks of what happened to the ships at this port, referring to 16 to 18 years ago, when several ships, 6 to 14, were destroyed and that these accidents occasionally happened in the new port. He also mentions another port, Ras el-Tin, where Ottoman ships sail, but these accidents do not occur there! And that Egyptian authorities are unaware that this port could have had many benefits for them if they had improved it. All of Alexandria's a trade and customs matters are in the hands of one person, who is a despot. Volney answers to the question of Europeans, "Why didn't they (Ottomans) repair or improve the port?", and points out that Europeans have been coming to this port for 200 years; this destruction is because of the Turkish spirit that destroys the past and the hope for the future. Volney links this matter to despotism in Egypt and the "Turkish spirit", which he later, expanded in "Ruins of the Empire".

As well as considering the commercial status of the city, Volney has also paid attention to its military equipment; "Alexandria does not have anything as a military-strategic city; its fortifications are not strong and it has no proper weapons or gunners; The 500 soldiers in the garrisons are all workers and do not know how to fire a gun. A sailboat from Malta or Russia is enough to capture it, but it is of no avail, because the water is scarce. The water in Alexandria is either supplied from a bay in the Nile or through water canals that are 75 kilometers far from the

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<sup>46</sup>Anne Jean Marie Rene Savary (1774-1833).

<sup>47</sup>Ships entering the port of Damietta and Alexandria every year created the fear that they would stimulate the demand for rice and wheat.

<sup>48</sup>France relocated its consulate from Cairo to Alexandria in 1777. The plague in Egypt has been described by French businessmen and people as an import that spreads from Alexandria to Rosetta and from Rosetta to Cairo and elsewhere, which is because of the goods being unloaded at the port and shipped to other locations.

<sup>49</sup>In June, due to the north and northwest winds, a ship can go from Marseilles to Alexandria or Cyprus in 11 to 14 days.

city, which are brought each year by the flood and fill the city's subsurface reservoirs for the following year.<sup>50</sup> Alexandria is only connected to Egypt through this canal."<sup>51</sup>

Turks are friendly to the French people who reside in this city. Volney considers Egyptian's opinion of Europeans as false, but admits that this opinion is rooted in wars and disorders that destroy any security and stimulate opposition to any discovery. He compares Egypt with Europe and Turkey (Ottoman Empire), which act violent and scary towards Europeans and have the superstitious belief that Europeans are like magicians who come to collect the treasures of genies. This opinion is preposterous but rooted in the war situation and the usual problems that threaten the security of any exploration activity.

Volney proposes new anthropology for Egypt by being in the East and facing human's diversity; he also shows what can be called a hyper-ideology that at this time (within the framework of Enlightenment humanism) indicates the fundamental diversity of humans based on location, customs or even "races". The eastern despotism that Montesquieu attributes to the climate is opposed to the western republic that comes from a moderate Europe. This becomes an interpretive framework for Volney. The general misery that is seen and the secrets that encompass homes, drive people into fear of "despotism" and suspicion of slavery.<sup>52</sup> In this regard, he describes the appearance of the people he has seen since arriving in Alexandria; a wild language, a violent accent and a frightening sound, strange apparel, unfamiliar figures, "wandering spirits."<sup>53</sup> Under covers that only shows their eyes, slim, black people walking barefoot or in sandals, wearing only a blue dress tightened with red leather or cloth. He also compares the hairstyles of French men with the Alexandrian men and the type of clothing they wear; sunburnt skins, beards and mustaches, wearing turbans around their heads. French men wear short and tight clothes, while Alexandrian men wear long clothes from neck to heel covering the whole body.

The natural state of Egypt, especially its warm and dry climate, becomes a criterion for analyzing the people there; "In April when the sun sets, the weather becomes so warm that the clothes are soaked in sweat as if it was raining. The

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<sup>50</sup>He has compared the amount of rainfall in Alexandria with other places.

<sup>51</sup>Volney, *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie, Pendant les Années 1783, 1784 et 1785, Suivi de Considérations Sur la Guerre des Russes et des Turks*, Vol. 1, 8.

<sup>52</sup>Sarga, Moussa., (France: ENS press, 2013), 169.

<sup>53</sup>Volney, *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie, Pendant les Années 1783, 1784 et 1785, Suivi de Considérations Sur la Guerre des Russes et des Turks*, Vol. 1, 4.

surroundings of Alexandria are dry, plant-free and uninhabited, and there is only one path of palm trees along the Nile..."<sup>54</sup>

To create new idea and change the overall idea of the East, Volney needed to validate what he saw and heard, so he used phrases like "this is a language...; there are clothes..." to make cultural differences understood as unpleasant; "... the palm trees cast their shadow like an umbrella. Houses have balconies or terraces without ceilings; minarets with a ladder going up to the sky, all warn one that he is in "another world." All the unknown things bring one back to Earth ..."<sup>55</sup>

#### 4.2 Alexandria from Jabarti's Point of Opinion

Jabarti, according to his method of historiography in *Ajāeb-al Asār*, has presented the readers dispersed information about Alexandria; therefore, by collecting, sorting and putting them together, one can create an idea of Alexandria. It should not be forgotten that the most fundamental difference between the idea of Alexandria in Volney's work and what is derived from Jabarti's work is that Volney looked at the city with a background, collected data and combined them to create a picture of Alexandria. At the same time, Jabarti wrote his work for another purpose, not for the purpose of creating an idea of Alexandria and presenting it to the readers.

According to Jabarti, Alexandria was the place of entry and exit of the Pashas<sup>56</sup> sent to run Egypt from the capital of Ottoman Empire.<sup>57</sup> And the "Arbāb al-Aqāqiz"<sup>58</sup> welcomed these Pashas. After their arrival, every Pasha lived in Alexandria for a while, first dealt with Egyptian affairs from there<sup>59</sup> and then went to Cairo. News from the capital of the Empire first reached Alexandria and then spread across Egypt.<sup>60</sup> Jabarti mentions the Pashas in Egypt, their arrival in Alexandria and their departure. When he speaks of any news or orders, he first notes that this news or order came from Alexandria. Furthermore, if anyone was punished in Cairo, they would be deported to Alexandria where they would be

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid, 52.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid, 3.

<sup>56</sup>A higher rank in Ottoman political and military system, granted to governors, generals etc.

<sup>57</sup>E.g., *A. Al-Jabarti Ajāeb-al Asār fi l-Tarājim wa-l-Akhbār*, Vol.1, 275; Vol. 2, 166.

<sup>58</sup>Authorities.

<sup>59</sup>*A. Al-Jabarti*, 582.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid, 313,359.

imprisoned or executed<sup>61</sup> in a tower called "Al-Borj al-Kabir."<sup>62</sup> Jabarti has continuously referred to Alexandria as the "Gap of Alexandria"<sup>63</sup> and described the Alexandria Castle<sup>64</sup>, Barri area<sup>65</sup>, the port of Alexandria<sup>66</sup> and the Bahri area<sup>67</sup> as the most essential parts of Alexandria. This port was trendy because of the many ship arrivals and departures.<sup>68</sup> Egypt also used this port to travel to the northern Mediterranean, such as Moscow.<sup>69</sup> Most of the people mentioned by Jabarti in connection with this city were those occupied in the navy or marine occupations such as captains,<sup>70</sup> guardsmen of waterways and ports, and those involved with the shipbuilding industry.<sup>71</sup> He mentions that most of Alexandria's merchants are Christians<sup>72</sup>, and emphasizes the importance of the city in the French-British conflicts,<sup>73</sup> because the presence of these foreign merchants and the money they paid to buy essential commodities, especially grains, caused prices to increase.<sup>74</sup> However, he does not mention the point of opinion of local people about these foreigners.

### **5. Similarities and Differences in Volney and Jabarti's Work about Alexandria**

An idea created from the scattered information about Alexandria in Jabarti's work is a harbor city with a military-business function. Undoubtedly, Jabarti's basis for historiography<sup>75</sup> has prevented him from drawing a detailed picture of a city such as Alexandria as an important and influential center in Egypt. An elitist approach in reporting historical events is the most important distinction between Jabarti and Volney's work in dealing with issues, which can be analyzed in different aspects with the example of Alexandria.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid, Vol.1, 301, 358, 371, 580, 581; Vol. 2, 44.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, Vol.1, 580.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid, Vol.1, 193,654; Vol. 2: 10, 71; Vol. 3, 646.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid, Vol. 2, 310.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., Vol. 2, 601.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid, Vol.2, 312.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid, Vol.3, 502.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid, Vol. 2, 412.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid, Vol.1, 66.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid, Vol.1, 107.

<sup>71</sup>A. *Al-Jabarti*, *ibid*, Vol.3, 363.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid, Vol.1, 609.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid, Vol.2, 428,466,491.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid, Vol.3, 554.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid, Vol.1, 6.

Volney has looked at Alexandria with a theory about a man and the city, where he lives and is being understood, and devised a compatible method. At first, he has tried to go beyond the created ideas by former travelers by carefully considering the political situation of the city, its economy and its facilities for providing water and food for the people, the city's military position, its natural state and its impact on people's morale and beliefs, to find some important data and transfer them to the French scientific community.<sup>76</sup> A similarity in Volney and Jabarti's work can be seen in their attention to Alexandria's military position. However, Jabarti's words do not contain detailed military information and he has merely emphasized its importance. At the same time, Volney provided the most accurate information on the subject.

## 6. Conclusion

Before his trip to Egypt, Volney had chosen a critical basis for himself; therefore, in addition to implicit assumptions such as Montesquieu's opinions, he sought to change the idea of the East in European minds. While Jabarti does not seek to challenge the image of the city of Alexandria; The name of the city is given only in the margin of the report of the arrival and departure of important people. Unlike Volney, Jabarti was a historian who paid attention to certain elements in his work; These elements are rooted in the tradition of historiography and Biography in the Islamic world, especially Egypt. From Jabarti point of view, the city does not have an independent identity, but the people who entered or left it were worth recording in history and where they were destined to, because Alexandria was the threshold of Egypt. In Volney's opinion, two matters have shaped a mythical opinion of Alexandria; first is the name of the city and its implicit glory, which is reminiscent of a prominent period in Western history, and the other is the number of historical monuments that deepen and validate the roots of this glorious idea. To change this idea, he has based his work on two human's species, Western and Eastern, which results in creating two cities, and in recognizing this duality, one must travel to the East and compare the content of Western books with the reality of the Eastern life. Contrary to Velenie's view, there are no two distinct types of human beings for Jabarti. For instance, he points out the differences between the people of Egypt and the French people in Alexandria by comparing their life situation. He assigns Egyptian "man" in a lower place,

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<sup>76</sup>An extended example of this approach can be found in the work of Edward William Lane, See: E. W. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: J. Murray, 1871).



especially by explaining Egyptian's opinion of Europeans and how they value their historical monuments, he describes them as superstitious.

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