

Major Cities of the Eastern Provinces

Explanation

The strength of the Roman Empire was found not only in the municipalities of Italy but also in the major cities of its provinces. Indeed, the most populous cities were located in the provinces of the region the Romans called “the East.” Founded by Alexander the Great, the Greek settlement of Alexandria in Egypt was the largest city in the world and, after Rome, the richest during the time of Christ. The second largest was Syria’s Antioch, one-time capital of the Seleucid Empire.

Reference

A. H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Provinces*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).



Major Cities of the Eastern Provinces in order of importance

CITY, PROVINCE	ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT	ANTIOCH, SYRIA	DAMASCUS, SYRIA	JERUSALEM, JUDEA
LOCATION	Mediterranean coast at mouth of Nile	On the Orontes River, ten miles from the Mediterranean	On the Barada River in the center of the Syrian Basin	Central Palestinian hill country
STATUS	Largest city in the world, once capital of Ptolemaic Empire, capital of Roman Egypt	Second largest city in the Roman Empire, once capital of the Seleucid Empire, capital of the Roman province of Syria	Leading city of Syria until the foundation of Antioch	Traditional chief city of Jews from c. 1100 B.C.
POPULATION	1,000,000	400,000–500,000	100,000	30,000
ETHNICITY	Greek, Jewish, Egyptian	Greek, Syrian, Jewish	Syrian, Greek, Jewish	Jewish
FOUNDATION	311 B.C. by Alexander the Great	300 B.C. by Seleucus I	3000 B.C.	c. 2800 B.C.
GOVERNMENT	Roman <i>Praefectus Aegypti</i>	Roman <i>legatus Augusti pro Praetore</i>	Local dynasts appointed by Rome	High Priest and Sanhedrin
ECONOMIC	Greatest trade center of the Mediterranean	Trade, industry, agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture
CHRISTIAN PRESENCE	Tradition associates the foundation of Alexandria's very large Christian community with the Evangelist Mark, one-time missionary companion of Peter	Barnabas and Saul/Paul labor to establish the Antiochene Church. After A.D. 49 Antioch seems to have become the headquarters of the Christian church and residence of Peter and other leading brethren (Acts 10–11, 13, and 15)	Christian community well established at the time of Paul's conversion (Acts 9, 22, 26)	From time of Christ until A.D. 66 when most Christians depart

