

Pharaonic Egypt through the eyes of a European traveller and collector

Excerpts from the travel diary of Johann Michael Wansleben (1672-3),
with an introduction and annotations by Esther de Groot

Esther de Groot

s0901245

Book and Digital Media Studies

University of Leiden

First Reader: P.G. Hoftijzer

Second reader: R.J. Demarée

Pharaonic Egypt through the eyes of a European traveller and collector

Excerpts from the travel diary of Johann Michael Wansleben (1672-3),
with an introduction and annotations by Esther de Groot.

For Harold M. Hays 1965-2013
Who taught me how to read hieroglyphs

Contents

| | |
|---|-------|
| List of illustrations | p. 8 |
| Introduction | p. 9 |
| Editorial note | p. 11 |
| Johann Michael Wansleben: A traveller of his time | p. 12 |
| Egypt in the Ottoman Empire | p. 21 |
| The journal | p. 28 |
| Travelled places | p. 53 |
| Acknowledgments | p. 67 |
| Bibliography | p. 68 |
| Appendix | p. 73 |

List of illustrations

| | |
|---|-------|
| Figure 1. Giza, BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 104 | p. 54 |
| Figure 2. The pillar of Marcus Aurelius, BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 123 | p. 59 |
| Figure 3. Satellite view of Der Abu Hennis and Der el Bersha | p. 60 |
| Figure 4. Map of Der Abu Hennis from the original manuscript | p. 61 |
| Figure 5. Map of the visited places in Egypt | p. 65 |
| Figure 6. Map of the visited places in the Faiyum | p. 66 |
| Figure 7. An offering table from Saqqara, BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 39 | p. 73 |
| Figure 8. A stela from Saqqara, BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 40 | p. 74 |
| Figure 9. Sitt Damyana, BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 45 | p. 75 |
| Figure 10. The Nile at Rosetta, BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 50 | p. 76 |
| Figure 11. A Coptic necklace, BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 81 | p. 77 |
| Figure 12. A saqqiya, BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 91 | p. 78 |
| Figure 13. The temple of Esna, BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 107 | p. 79 |
| Figure 14. The White Monastery at Sohag, BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 117 | p. 80 |
| Figure 15. A Greek-Coptic stela, BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 120 | p. 81 |
| Figure 16. BNF Ms. Italien 435, title page | p. 82 |
| Figure 17. BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 1 | p. 83 |
| Figure 18. BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 2 | p. 84 |
| Figure 19. BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 3 | p. 85 |
| Figure 20. BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 4 | p. 86 |

Introduction

This edition has been made in the form of the final thesis for the Master Programme Book and Digital Media Studies of the University of Leiden. It is based on the English translation of the travel journal of the German scholar and collector Johann Michael Wansleben, published as *The Present State of Egypt; Or, a New Relation of a Late Voyage into That Kingdom* (London, 1678). The original manuscript, written in Italian, is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. For reasons of accessibility it was decided not to use the original manuscript text for the edition. The French translation entitled *Nouvelle relation, en forme de Journal, d'un voyage fait en Égypte en 1672 et 1673* (Paris, 1677) has been consulted in those instances where the English publication was unclear and compared to see possible alterations.

As will become clear in the first chapter Wansleben's travel journal and other books have been largely ignored in the scholarly world for many years, which is the reason why he and his work had not received the attention they deserve. Wansleben's name will not be recognized in the same way by Egyptologists as for example the names of Herodotus, Giovanni Belzoni or Amelia Edwards, although deserving as much. The few times Wansleben is mentioned in the secondary literature it is by coptologists. Although this makes complete sense, as Wansleben's books are of great importance to this field, his descriptions of the Pharaonic monuments of Egypt have been somewhat forgotten. It is the aim of this edition to bring his observations on this aspect to the attention of modern readers. Because of the limited space of this thesis it has been decided to present a selection of his travel diary. The descriptions of Coptic and Arabic sites are left out.

The present edition starts with a chapter on travellers in Egypt, a biography of Wansleben and a description of his journal. Next follows a chapter about Ottoman Egypt, to give Wansleben's journey the appropriate setting. After this the edition follows. In the final chapter the reader can find explanations about all the monuments described in the journal, following the chronology of Wansleben's tour.

In the editorial note an explanation is given about the presentation of the text and the changes that have been made to the original text. In the appendix some examples of Wansleben's original handwriting can be found, as well as the drawings that accompany the manuscript that formed the basis of the English translation.

Editorial note

The transcription of Johann Michael Wansleben's *The Present State of Egypt; Or, a new relation of a late voyage into that kingdom* is based on the printed edition, published in 1678. Some adjustments have been made to the text.

First of all the spelling has been updated to modern English. Although it concerns minor adjustments, it is one of the intentions of this edition to make the journal more accessible. For example, capitalized first letters of nouns have been changed to a regular lower case, as is the custom nowadays. Also, as some spellings of verbs have changed during the course of time, these have been altered according to modern use. Next to modernization of verbs, place names have also been replaced by their modern counterparts so that the reader may recognize them. Also, it would not be consequent to modernize the English spelling, but not the place names.

Secondly, Wansleben had the habit of writing very long sentences in his journal, which can cause confusion. Moreover, his interpunction at times differs from the way it is used nowadays. Consequently, some sentences have been broken up and modern interpunction is applied, without however changing the meaning of the sentence.

Thirdly, note that this edition presents a selection of Wansleben's original text. Only those passages where he describes the monuments of Pharaonic Egypt are transcribed. Because of this some paragraphs have been left out, while others are adjoined, even if not originally so in the printed book. Missing parts are always indicated by [...]. If something has been added by the editor it is indicated by < >.

Wansleben did not present every description of a monument with a new heading. Therefore some new headings are added, in the style of the original text, in order to present a clear structure to the reader.

In all these cases no special mention of these changes has been made. If the reader wishes to read the entire text, he should turn to the original edition of *The Present State of Egypt*.

Johann Michael Wansleben: A traveller of his time

‘This country of Egypt has heretofore been the richest magazin of learning, as well of provisions. It has flourished in all manual arts, and the rarest sciences. No doubt there are yet to be seen some monuments of the primitive grandeur and learning of the ancient inhabitants. As therefore Vanslebius has judged them worthy to be visited in his travels.’

— M.D., translator of Wansleben’s journal —

The history of Egypt and the monuments it has left have attracted the attention of scholars, treasure hunters, enthusiasts, archaeologists and egyptologists for centuries. However, whatever the reason for a journey into Egypt, all travellers were a product of their time and the society they lived in. In this chapter the attitude toward travel in Egypt and the reasons for doing so are shortly discussed from the Greco-Roman period up to the seventeenth century. In the second part the life and travels of Johann Michael Wansleben and the document that served as a primary source for this edition are discussed.

Travellers through the ages

When Egypt became part of the Roman empire in 30 BC it became a destination for many different sorts of tourists. It was believed that the Egyptian civilization was the first of the world, and studying it could bring much knowledge. People came for education, religious knowledge or simply for entertainment. There were also many tourists coming to Alexandria, a city famous for the many healers that resided there. In the classical period Alexandria was often the starting point for a trip along a set group of sites, most of the times Memphis, Giza, the Valley of the Kings and the temple on the island of Philae.¹

Although many of these travellers have left accounts of their trip, none of them are very original. In these days it was a standard to follow Herodotus’ *Histories*, written between 460-455 BC. New travel accounts rarely added something new, and

¹ B.M. Fagan, *The rape of the Nile. Tomb robbers, tourists, and archaeologists in Egypt* (London: MacDonald and Jones, 1977), pp. 20-23.

Herodotus was often plagiarized. Moreover, the myths and hearsays Herodotus described in his books were copied and have been taken for the truth for centuries. ²

When the Roman empire fell Egypt became a Christian nation, and the attitude towards the ancient monuments changed. Temples were shut down, vandalized and taken down to use the stones in new buildings. People started to live in or on ancient monuments, or they were covered by the sand of the desert.³ The travel accounts of the classical authors disappeared out of view, a situation which would last until the thirteenth century.⁴

The Arabs who conquered Egypt in the seventh century had a different attitude towards the Pharaonic remains than that of the Christians, but they did not understand the culture that had been responsible for them. Moreover, there was nobody anymore who could read hieroglyphs, hieratic or demotic. The monuments were thought of as having been built by magicians or giants.⁵ Although this was a period in which hardly any European traveller visited the country, Egypt was an important destination for Muslim tourists coming for trade, diplomatic missions, scholarly endeavours or leisure. The country was also an important stopover for Muslim pilgrims making their way to Mecca.⁶

In the Middle Ages many monuments were dismantled or damaged because people were looking for treasures. This reached a climax in the fifteenth century when the treasure hunting business was even being taxed and numerous guidebooks were written on how to best hunt for treasures.

European knowledge about Egypt during the Middle Ages was minimal. Few people actually visited Egypt, and the pilgrims who did, described everything from a Hebrew or Biblical point of view. The book that was considered the best guide for a trip to the country was *The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Mandeville, Knight*. The book was actually written by one Jean d'Outremeuse who had never visited Egypt in person. It presented a collection of unreliable sources and made-up descriptions.⁷ It is significant for a period when people relied on hearsay for their knowledge of Egypt. On the *Mappa Mundi* at Hereford Cathedral from 1290 Egypt is even depicted as a

² Fagan, *The rape of the Nile*, p. 15.

³ Fagan, *The rape of the Nile*, p. 35.

⁴ C. Foster, 'The zoology of Herodotus and his Greek descendants', in J. Starkey and O. El Daly (eds.), *Desert travelers from Herodotus to T.E. Lawrence* (Durham: ASTENE, 2000), p.15.

⁵ Fagan, *The rape of the Nile*, p. 38.

⁶ J. Starkey and O. El Daly (eds.), *Desert travelers from Herodotus to T.E. Lawrence* (Durham: ASTENE, 2000), pp. xvi-xvii.

⁷ Fagan, *The rape of the Nile*, pp. 40-42.

country in with many mythical creatures live, such as the unicorn and the phoenix.⁸

The period between the classical era, with authors such as Herodotus, Strabo (*Geographica*) and Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*), and the sixteenth century is somewhat of a lacuna when it comes to travel accounts. However, there were some Arab authors who wrote about the country. One of the most important is Maqrizi, who wrote his topographical work *al-Khiṭaṭ* in 1422, mainly on the topographical history of Egypt and Cairo in specific.⁹

The Ottoman conquest of Egypt signifies a change in tourism. Because Sultan Selim I promised religious protection to all non-Muslim people in Egypt it was suddenly a lot safer to visit the country. Europeans again started to come to the country, although the reasons for their visits were not scholarly, but religious and commercial. The sixteenth century signifies the start of a large and profitable trading network in mummies. For ages the material pissaphalt was used in the Near East as a drug against all kinds of wounds. Because it was hard to come by, Europeans started dealing in mummies, as the bituminous materials that were used during the mummification were seen as a good replacement of pissaphalt. Grinded up mummy quickly became a highly coveted drug in Europe. It was even not uncommon for dealers to secretly use modern corpses because of the high demand. Although the government tried to put an end to the trade by implementing high taxes and prohibiting the shipping of mummies, the mummy trade went on until the early nineteenth century.¹⁰

During the Renaissance the attitude in the West towards Egypt changed again. People became more interested in the diversity of humankind and all that it had achieved. This caused a new interest in Egyptian history, and in collecting Egyptian artefacts for study purposes. Private cabinets of curiosity were created, a trend that started in the sixteenth century among the Italian cardinals and the Grand duke of Florence, Cosimo de Medici I. The Grand Tour, that was regarded as part of the education of young adult men, offered great possibilities to acquire these exotic artefacts.¹¹

In the seventeenth century collecting Egyptian antiquities became more professional thanks to the activity of antiquarians looking for information, but also

⁸ Starkey and El Daly (eds.), *Desert travellers*, p. xv.

⁹ Starkey and El Daly (eds.), *Desert travellers*, p. xvi.

¹⁰ Fagan, *The rape of the Nile*, pp. 44-46.

¹¹ Fagan, *The rape of the Nile*, p. 50.

for profit on the European market. During these years the biggest collectors were the French kings and noblemen who sent special parties to Egypt and other parts of the Near East to find and collect objects for them. Johann Michael Wansleben's journey through Egypt in 1672 and 1673 falls in this last category, as he was working as a collector of coins and manuscripts for the library of King Louis XIV.¹²

Johann Michael Wansleben

Johann Michael Wansleben, or Vansleb, was born on the 1st of November 1635, as the son of a Lutheran pastor in Sommerda, Germany. He received a good education, studying philosophy and theology in Erfurt and Königsberg. His scholarly skills were put to good use when he was a tutor in a rich Prussian family. In 1657 he enlisted in the Prussian army for a campaign against Poland. Not long after he decided the army was not for him, and that he wanted to work as a merchant. This led him briefly to Amsterdam, but apparently not being very successful in his new endeavours he soon returned to Erfurt.¹³

In Erfurt Wansleben met the linguist Hiob Ludolf who would play an important role in his life. Impressed by his skills Ludolf took young Wansleben in as his protégé and taught him how to read and write Ge'ez (Ethiopian). When he was fluent in this new language Ludolf sent him to London to oversee the publication of his Ethiopian-Latin lexicon by Edmund Castell. Convinced the lexicon could be improved, Wansleben made some additions and adjustments. Although the lexicon was published in 1661 with a foreword in which Ludolf praises Wansleben, he was displeased that his pupil had meddled with his publication.

On Wansleben's return to Erfurt Ludolf convinced the Duke of Saxe-Gotha to send his pupil to Ethiopia via Egypt in order to educate the Ethiopian church about the Lutheran church, create strong bonds with the Ethiopian king and persuade Ethiopian scholars to travel to Germany to study Protestantism. In June 1663 Wansleben departed for Egypt, where he arrived in January 1664. Although his mission was made very clear by his patrons, Wansleben never made his way to Ethiopia, but stayed in Egypt instead, where he studied the Alexandrian church and

¹² Fagan, *The rape of the Nile*, p. 51.

¹³ G.-R. Delahaye, 'Les Coptes vu par le voyageur Johann Michael Vansleb au XVII^e siècle', in A.—A. Maravella (ed.), *En quête de la lumière: mélanges in honorem Ashraf A. Sadek*, BAR International Series (Oxford: Archeopress, 1960), p. 146; A. Hamilton, *The Copts and the West 1439-1822. The European discovery of the Egyptian church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 142.

copied Ethiopian and Coptic manuscripts.¹⁴

Wansleben's reluctance to travel southwards had to do with his new friendship with the Coptic patriarch Matthew IV. He told Wansleben that the journey was not safe, and would even be impossible. Moreover, he expressed his scepticism towards the Lutheran church. This caused Wansleben to not only ignore his original mission, but even to convert to Roman Catholicism. In 1665 he travelled to Rome to abjure Protestantism and to join the Dominican order. Ludolf and the Duke of Saxe-Gotha felt greatly betrayed by this act. Not only had he misused their travel grants and disobeyed their orders, but he had also turned his back on the Lutheran church.

His conversion caused Wansleben to write two versions of his journal of his journey in Egypt in 1672 and 1673. The first was written in German before his conversion. It was sent to Ludolf, but only published much later by Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus in the third volume of his *Sammlung der merkwürdigsten Reisen in den Orient* (1794). His second version *Relazione dello stato presente dell' Egitto* was written in Italian after his conversion and dedicated to Cosimo de Medici. Contrary to the German version it was published as early as 1671 in Paris. The difference between the two versions mostly lies in the chapter on the Copts. In the Italian manuscript Wansleben writes that the Coptic church acknowledges the primacy of the Roman Pope. In the German version however he states that they only acknowledge the patriarch of the Alexandrian church as their leader and he stresses their belief in transubstantiation.¹⁵

Although Wansleben fell out of grace with the German Lutherans, the French court was highly interested in this newly converted scholar. In 1670 he was introduced to Louis XIV's minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who decided to send Wansleben to Ethiopia to collect information and objects for the library of the King. A long list of very precise instructions for the mission was drawn up by the custodian of the Royal Library, Pierre Carcavy. Not only was Wansleben to buy any kind of special manuscript and coin for the library's collection, he also had to describe all modern and ancient buildings, dresses, machines, politics, animals, plants and tools of the country. Furthermore he had to excavate the sites of Ephesus, Nicaea and Baalbek on his way to Egypt.¹⁶ Colbert did not agree with this list at all, and gave Wansleben

¹⁴ Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, p. 143.

¹⁵ Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, p. 144.

¹⁶ The instructions of Carcavy are preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris under file number BNF. Ms. Latin 17172, fol. 173.

instructions to make his way to Ethiopia through Egypt.¹⁷

On the 8th of May Wansleben departed for Egypt via Cyprus, Aleppo and Damascus, and arrived in Damietta on the 18th of March in 1672. From the moment of his departure Wansleben corresponded with Carcavy and Colbert about his progress. These letters form a kind of journal of his journey. Most of the letters to Carcavy and Colbert are written in Italian and the responses are mostly in French.¹⁸ Not only did he send letters back to France, but also no less than 575 manuscripts in Greek, Coptic, Hebrew, Arabic and Ethiopian. Furthermore he sent some curiosities like mummies, crocodile skins and wooden statues of Egyptian gods.¹⁹

However valuable the contribution of Wansleben to the Royal Library, Colbert was displeased because of Wansleben's reluctance to travel to Ethiopia. In order to keep him happy Wansleben sent Colbert a draft of his *Histoire de l'Église d'Alexandrie* and a version of his journal written in Italian about his journey in Egypt that would later be published in French as *Nouvelle relation, en forme de Journal, d'un voyage fait en Égypte en 1672 et 1673*.²⁰ Wansleben's book on the church of Alexandria is one of the main contributions to coptology, but still it did not please Colbert who wanted him to travel southwards to Ethiopia. Instead, Wansleben left Egypt in October 1673 for Istanbul, where he spent most of his time afterwards. In 1675 he received a letter from Carcavy warning him about Colbert's anger. According to him, Colbert had not read his manuscript on the Alexandrian church and thought of his journal as nothing more than gossip about his friends at the French consulate.²¹ Not much later Wansleben received a letter from Colbert himself, urging him to obey his orders. Three months later Colbert had apparently changed his mind and ordered Wansleben to return to Paris, where he arrived in February 1676. Colbert and Carcavy refused to pay him for any of his expenses and he was ridiculed in the scholarly world for neglecting to go to Ethiopia twice and turning his back on the Lutheran church. He died as a bankrupt and shunned man in Bourron, France in June 1679 at the age

¹⁷ Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, p. 145.

¹⁸ The original letters are kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France under file numbers BNF. Ms. Latin 17172 and Ms.Nouv.aca.franç.4193. The letters are published in H. Omont, *Missions archéologiques françaises en Orient aux XVII et XVIII siècles*, vol. I (Paris: Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, 1902), pp.66-174.

¹⁹ For a complete list of all the manuscripts, their titles and the curiosities see Omont, *Missions archéologiques*, vol. II (Paris: Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, 1902), pp.879-896.

²⁰ The Italian manuscript is archived in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France under file number BNF Ms. Italien 435. For an impression of the document see figures 16-20 in the appendix.

²¹ Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, p. 147.

of 43.²²

Turning his back on two of his patrons was a mistake that Wansleben paid for even long after his death, especially in Germany. Although his *Histoire de l'Église d'Alexandrie* and his journals were the best sources available on the Coptic world at that time, they have been ignored or ridiculed by scholars well into the eighteenth century. Would scholars have read his accounts, many mistakes in literature on the Copts could have been prevented as his books were the only ones of this period that were completely based on Coptic sources. However, Wansleben, and therefore his books, were seen as untrustworthy.²³ Moreover, the Germans saw him as the reason why the Saxon libraries were almost empty of sources on the Coptic church, while he had filled the libraries and archives of France.²⁴ In the Protestant world Abdanacus' *Historia Jacobitarum*, published in 1675, replaced Wansleben's *Histoire de l'Église d'Alexandrie* as the main source on the Copts and Jacobites. As a pious Copt, Abdanacus' account was regarded as trustworthy. In 1692 the book was translated into English, increasing its popularity even more, and this explains why it was placed on the Roman Index of Prohibited Books in 1765.²⁵

The present state of Egypt: A description of the primary source

The book used for this edition *The present state of Egypt; Or, a new relation of a late voyage into that kingdom* is not the original version as written by Wansleben, but a translation of the French version *Nouvelle relation, en forme de Journal, d'un voyage fait en Égypte en 1672 et 1673* published in Paris in 1677 by the publisher Etienne Michallet, which in its turn is a translation of the Italian manuscript kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, file BNF Ms. Italien 435. Except for a different introduction by the translators, some typos and the editorial marginal notes in the French publication that are not there in the English publication, both versions are exactly the same. The English translator did not add, alter or delete any passages from the French version. In fact, he even copied some mistakes in the dates and names that had been made in the French version.²⁶

A note in the Italian manuscript makes clear that it was based on an earlier day

²² Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, p. 148.

²³ Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, p. 151.

²⁴ Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, p. 171.

²⁵ Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, p. 172.

²⁶ The name of Capuchin Father Protais, is spelled at Portais in both versions. The dates of the visits to Giza are wrong in both versions as well.

to day journal Wansleben had kept. Still, the manuscript is not a streamlined account. The manuscript text is fifteen percent larger than the printed French publication and mainly consist of unstructured notes of his experiences. For the publication the texts have been edited, selected and put in correct order. Notes that Wansleben made in the margins of the manuscript are not included in the French publication.²⁷

Another major difference is that the original manuscript is accompanied by twelve drawings, that are absent from the French publication. The drawings in the manuscript are as follows:

1. Folio 39: an offering table with hieroglyphic signs from Saqqara.
2. Folio 40: a stela with hieroglyphic signs and human figures from Saqqara.
3. Folio 45: the town of Sitt Damyana.
4. Folio: 50: the Nile near Rosetta.
5. Folio 81: a Coptic necklace.
6. Folio 91: a saqqiya (waterwheel).
7. Folio 104: the pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx.
8. Folio 107: the façade of the temple of Esna.
9. Folio 117: the White Monastery at Sohag.
10. Folio 120: a Coptic-Greek stela.
11. Folio 123: the pillar of Marcus Aurelius at Antinoe.
12. Folio 127: Der Abu Hennis and the surrounding area.²⁸

The drawings were made by a man named Abulmene, of whom nothing is known, and by one Leonardo Iatro, who was in the service of the French consul de Tiger.²⁹

As has been mentioned above, Wansleben never made his way to Ethiopia. In fact he did not travel any farther south than Der el Bersha. Because he wanted the reader to know what monuments were to be seen in Luxor and its surroundings he added a part of the travel journal by the Capuchin Fathers P. Protais and Charles-François d'Orléans. During his first journey in Egypt Wansleben had met Protais in 1664. After Protais had died in April 1671, d'Orléans gave him the accounts of their trip. The descriptions of Luxor, Karnak, the Memnon colossi and Dendera are thus by the hands of the two Capuchin Fathers. Their accounts were also published in

²⁷ M. Martin, 'Le journal de Vansleb en Égypte', *Bulletin de l'Institute Français d'Archéologie Orientale*, 97 (1997), p. 182.

²⁸ See the chapter 'Traveled places' for the drawings of Giza, the pillar of Marcus Aurelius and Der Abu Hennis. See the appendix for the other nine drawings.

²⁹ Martin, 'Le journal de Vansleb', p. 183.

Melchisedech Thévenot's *Relations de divers voyages curieux qui n'ont point été publiées, et qu'on a traduit ou tiré des originaux des voyageurs français, espagnols, allemands, portugais, anglois, hollandois, persans, arabes & autres orientaux [...]*, published in Paris in 1672.³⁰

The English version of the journal *The present state of Egypt; Or, a new relation of a late voyage into that Kingdom* was published in London, in 1678. The book was printed for, and sold by John Starkey who was one of the many booksellers in Fleet Street. He sold his books from in his house 'The Mitre' near the Middle Temple gate from 1658 to 1689.³¹ According to the title page the book was printed by a printer with the initials R.E., in all likelihood Robert Everingham, who had his premises on Ave Mary Lane.³² The book was translated by one M.D., who also wrote a short introduction to the book, but he has not been identified.

The book begins with a four-page (unnumbered) introduction by the translator. On pages one to three Wansleben begins with his journal, but he breaks it off for a description of Egypt, its people, the seasons, the Nile, the crocodile, the Pashas, the beys, the trees, plants and the birds, that continues until page 65. The journal goes on until page 253, which is followed by five pages with a short index of place names and important terms. The book ends with a five page advertisement list of other books sold by John Starkey.

The book was printed in a clear font, but the type had obviously had been used quite often, as many of the characters are broken. The format is octavo.

³⁰ Martin, 'Le journal de Vansleb', p. 184.

³¹ H.R. Plomer, *et.al.*, *A dictionary of the printers and booksellers who were at work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1668 to 1725* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), p. 280.

³² Plomer, *Dictionary*, p. 113.

Egypt in the Ottoman Period

*'The people think of wealth and power as the greatest fate, but in this world a spell of health is the best state. What men call sovereignty is a worldly strife and constant war. Worship of God is the highest throne, the happiest of all estates.'*³³

— Sultan Suleiman I —

The period in which Wansleben visited Egypt the country was a part of the Ottoman Empire. It had been so since 1517, and would remain as such until the conquest by Napoleon in 1798. In this chapter the political, religious and cultural aspects of Ottoman Egypt will be briefly outlined in order to give Wansleben's account an appropriate setting.

The politics of the Ottoman Empire: its rulers and conflicts

Before the Ottomans came to rule Egypt, it was led by the Mamluks. This dynasty was founded when Egypt fell into the hands of the Bahriyya Mamluk regiment of the last Abbuid sultan al-Malik al-salih Najm al-in Ayyub, that took advantage of a turbulent time when crusaders were attacking the Middle-East. When the Mamluk regiment defeated Louis IX and his crusaders in 1250 they founded a sultanate. The Mamluk political system was quite different to what the Egyptians had been used to. High positions were not hereditary. On the contrary, young boys were brought in from the Balkans or the Caucasus, bought as slaves from white non-Muslim, preferably Turkish families. In Egypt they received an elite training, were converted to orthodox Sunni Islam, and set free afterwards to join the Mamluk ruling class. The country was thus led by an oligarchy of soldiers that also ruled Syria and the Hejaz.

In Mamluk Egypt there were sharp distinctions between the ruling class and the population. The main difference was the language, as the rulers spoke Turkish and the ruled spoke Arab. Dress signified quite clearly to which rank someone belonged. For peasants it was a hard time, as they were oppressed and obliged to pay high taxes.³⁴

³³ P. Mansel, *Constantinople: city of the world's desire* (London: Murray, 1995), p. 84.

³⁴ M. Winter, *Egyptian society under Ottoman rule: 1517-1798* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-3.

By the end of the fourteenth century the army of the Mamluks started to wane. All of their enemies had been dealt with, which meant that their army did not develop itself anymore. Moreover, the soldiers refused to use the new gunfire weaponry, which was looked upon as unmanly and unchivalrous for battle. At the same time the Ottomans began to expand their territory in the north-west of Anatolia in their battle against the Byzantine empire. In 1453 Sultan Mehmed II took Constantinople and called it Istanbul. By the end of the fifteenth century the Mamluk and Ottoman empires found themselves in a conflict over the land that lay between their two empires. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the tension rose even further due to the powerful Shi 'I Safavid dynasty in Persia. The Ottoman sultan Selim I feared a Mamluk-Safavid treaty, and when diplomatic negotiations failed, it came to war. In 1516 the Ottomans conquered Syria, and in 1517 they took Egypt.³⁵

The Egyptians had to adjust to the new situation. Their country was now a province governed from the Ottoman capital Istanbul. Moreover, the Ottomans had different traditions than the Mamluks. Society now seemed much more egalitarian, and social classes, especially in the army, were hard to discern because of a lack of differentiating robes. Chronicler Ibn Iyas even complains about this when he wrote that the army “was a rabble, and one could not tell an emir from an ordinary soldier.”³⁶ How different was the Mamluk government with its great festivities and ceremonies displaying all its riches.

During the first years Istanbul interfered heavily with the new province. Coins and weights were replaced by those used in Istanbul, and all legal business now went through a Turkish judge instead of the heads of the four Cairene law schools. However difficult these changes were, formerly suppressed groups such as women and Jews received more rights under Ottoman law, the *qanun*, than they had under the Mamluk law.³⁷

Over time the Egyptians got used to their new rulers, and Istanbul's interference was reduced. Egypt never became a true Ottoman province with a feudal military system, because the governors realized its economy was hindered by too much intervention. Chroniclers from the Ottoman period describe the new rulers in a fairly positive manner, as good and pious orthodox Muslim men who did a fine job organizing the yearly *Hijrah* to Mecca and Medina. Moreover, they constructed many

³⁵ Winter, *Egyptian society*, pp. 5-7.

³⁶ Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 10.

³⁷ Winter, *Egyptian society*, pp. 11-12.

secular and religious buildings in Mecca, pleasing the Muslim population.³⁸

The seventeenth century was a turbulent era for Egypt and its Ottoman rulers. The original plan was to have a governor, or Pasha, rule Egypt as a representative of the Sultan, who never visited Egypt himself. However, now a group of beys took over power. In other Ottoman provinces a bey, or *sanjaq*, was the administrative head of a certain territory, a position below that of the Pasha. In Egypt, however, the situation was different. Many Mamluks still held high offices, including that of a bey, and as a result the beylicate became a reinstatement of the Mamluk principles and political culture and a way for military commanders to gain privileges.³⁹ While the Pashas nearly never left the Citadel in Cairo, the beys began to contact the Sultan in Istanbul directly when something happened they did not agree with. It was not uncommon in this period that a bey was appointed as a deputy of the Pasha, a *qa'im maqam*, which in actual practice meant that he held all power. The Pasha's duties were limited to sending the annual taxes to Istanbul, the minting of coins, sending the army to fight Ottoman wars abroad, the proclamation of sermons in the Citadel's mosque, the organization of the annual *Hijrah* to Mecca and Medina, and the recognition of the sovereignty of the sultan.⁴⁰ After a period of strong rule by the beys, their group started to fall apart because of internal conflicts. The two major rivalling families, the Faqariyya and the Qasimayya clans, fought each other for the strongest position, weakening the beylicate in the process.⁴¹

This situation gave way to a new group of rulers. The military had developed into a political group with its own interests. It comprised seven regiments, called *ojaqs*, of which the strongest and biggest were the Janissaries. This was the group that were the de facto rulers of Egypt in the time Wansleben travelled the country, although the other regiments, and most of all the Azab (the light infantry), also sought to gain power. Many men joined the regiments, not as soldiers, but as *yoldas* or comrades, seeking protection.⁴² Many of them were Arab speaking, *awlad Arab*, which was disliked by the Ottoman Pasha and caused tension between the Arab speaking *Misir qullari* (domesticated Egyptians) and the Turkish speaking newcomers, the *Rum oghlani*, who were not born in Egypt.⁴³

³⁸ Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 17.

³⁹ Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 49.

⁴⁰ Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 20.

⁴¹ Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 22.

⁴² Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 58.

⁴³ Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 54.

In 1711 the hostility between the Janissary and the Azab regiments led to a civil war. Not only the regiments were at war, but also the Faqariyya Beys siding with the Janissaries and the Qasimayya Beys siding with the Azab regiment. Ultimately the Janissary camp was defeated and the beylicate was reinstated as the de facto rulers of Egypt. It stayed this way until Napoleon's conquest in 1798.⁴⁴

During Wansleben's travels the country was under the official rule of Bayburtlu Kara Ibrahim Pasha⁴⁵ who was succeeded by Canpulazade Hüseyin Pasha in 1673. They stood under the command of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed IV. Wansleben also informs the reader that the 16 beys who were in office in 1672⁴⁶ paid an annual amount of tax to the Pasha (who in turn paid money to the sultan) and speaks of the *kāshifs*, who are the governors of small provinces. According to his journal there were 24 in Upper-Egypt, six in Middle-Egypt and six in Lower-Egypt, adding up to 36 *kāshifs* in total. Wansleben also mentions that the government was not only made up of the Pasha and his entourage, but also of the officers of the Janissaries the other regiments. However, he does not mention the Beys as part of the government, which is an indication of their decline in this period.⁴⁷

Religion in the Ottoman Empire: treatment of the minorities

As stated above the Ottoman rulers were orthodox Sunni Muslims, just like their Mamluk predecessors. Although there was a big linguistic gap between the rulers and the population, religion was for the largest part of the population not a part of this barrier. However, Egypt was also home to many Jews and Christians (Copts). Especially the latter were a major group, often living in villages which were entirely Christian. These minorities were called *Dhimmis*.

Most of the time the attitude towards these groups was pragmatic. For example, Jews were regarded as good financial advisors. This weighed more heavily than the fact that they were not Muslim. The living standard of the Copts was usually higher than that of ordinary Muslims, and it was not uncommon to see Copts in high positions. In fact, the existence of minorities had greatly improved under the

⁴⁴ P.M. Holt, 'The pattern of Egyptian political history from 1517 to 1798', in: P.M. Holt (ed.), *Political and social change in modern Egypt. Historical Studies from the Ottoman conquest to the United Arab republic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 86.

⁴⁵ J.M. Wansleben, *The present state of Egypt; Or, a new relation of a late voyage into that kingdom* (London: Robert Everingham, 1678), p. 57

⁴⁶ For a complete list of the beys, see Wansleben, *The present state of Egypt*, pp. 59-60.

⁴⁷ Wansleben, *The present state of Egypt*, pp. 15-17.

Ottomans, after the oppression and exploitation of the Mamluks.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the attitude towards the Jews and Copts could change with every Pasha, some of whom prosecuted them. Often the Jews were discriminated more than the Copts, an attitude which had its roots in the teachings of the Quran. A major factor also was that Jews hardly ever converted to Islam, while the Copts often did. Consequently a Copt was seen as a potential Muslim, while a Jew was not. Still, conflicts between Copts and Muslims were more common than conflicts with Jews. This simply had to do with the fact that there were many more Copts in Egypt, who at times were inclined to revolt.⁴⁹

During Wansleben's travels the Copts faced a government that was less prone to treat them in the same way as Muslims, as is shown in the following passage from his journal:

I must need confess, that there is no nation in Egypt so much afflicted as are the Copts, because they have nobody amongst them who deserves to be honoured for his knowledge, or feared for his power and authority, for all that were rich and wealthy are destroyed by the Mohammedans. Therefore the rest are now looked upon as the scum of the world, and worse than the Jews. The Turks abuse them at their pleasure, they shut up their churches, and the doors of their houses when they please, upon light occasions, altogether unjust, to draw from them some sums of money.⁵⁰

Although this passage must be seen in the light of Wansleben himself being Christian, and who may have weighed the wrong done to the Copts more than that afflicted to the Jews, it does make a statement. Copts clearly did not have an easy life under Ottoman rule, even though it had improved compared to the Mamluk period.

Cultural aspects of the Ottoman Empire: infrastructure, amusement and safety

Wansleben mostly spent his time in Cairo, where the environment was certainly very lively. The city had a large network of big and small roads, full with donkeys, horses, mules and asses. The streets were an exciting place to be, filled with all kinds of entertainers. The many coffee places were ideal settings for people to meet.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 199.

⁴⁹ Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 222.

⁵⁰ Wansleben, *The present state of Egypt*, p. 174.

⁵¹ Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 238.

The cleanliness of the city varied much per neighbourhood. According to the Ottoman *qanun*, streets should be regularly cleaned with water, and people were obliged to keep their own street clean. However, this rule was only practiced in the business area where the higher classes did their work. The poor neighbourhoods were very filthy places, and infectious diseases like the plague were a recurring phenomenon.⁵²

At the bottom of the urban hierarchy in the city were black slaves. Above them was the proletariat, the largest social class. The next layer was made up of the most important class of the society of artisans and merchants, which just like in Europe were organized in guilds. On top was the ruling class of the pasha and his entourage, the military, the beys and the officers of the seven regiment.⁵³

Outside of the city, travellers, and especially pilgrims, should have been protected by Arab tribes hired to ensure the routes were free of robbers. These tribes also helped with the transport of grain to Mecca and Medina. In reality they often robbed travellers as soon as they were on the territory of another Arab tribe and they could be quite cruel to villagers and travellers⁵⁴ as Wansleben experienced on more than one occasion during his travels. Of course, the attire and possessions of a wealthy European traveller attracted the attention of these tribes and of villagers, which can be read in this passage:

At my landing I wanted a man to carry my clothes to the house where I intended to lodge. I called therefore some of the Arabians that were newly arrived from the deserts of Macarius with nitre, or saltpetre. He that carried my box of wine finding it to be very heavy, and knowing not what was in it, he thought it had been a box of money. Therefore being proud of his burden, he told all that he met with in the way that he carried a box full of money, that belonged to a Franc newly arrived, that was going to the monasteries. This lie spread about the village, and was believed as true, so that I was in no small danger, for there was no other talk in the town but the rich Franc that was there, and of means to get his money. They thought I had been some consul

⁵² Winter, *Egyptian society*, pp. 243-236.

⁵³ Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 243.

⁵⁴ Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 104.

that travelled incognito to see the country, therefore they resolved to wait for me in the way, and take from me all my treasure.⁵⁵

Fearing for his safety, Wansleben took refuge with the k̄ashif of Tarnût. However, this man conspired against him, causing him to flee in the middle of the night.

Thus, while Cairo was a reasonably safe place for foreigners, travelling the country came with great risks, as is demonstrated by this and other passages in Wansleben's account.

⁵⁵ Wansleben, *The present state of Egypt*, pp. 131-132.

The journal

'The wise man who goes and comes will place the greatness of the god in his heart.'

— From the teachings of Papyrus Insinger, second century AD—

April 27th, 1672

Of the pyramids

In my first voyage to Egypt I had seen the pyramids⁵⁶, but, having another opportunity offered to me, I went there to view again these rare monuments of antiquity, to see whether I might not observe something more than I have taken notice of in my first relation.

On the 27th of April I went there, in the company of the French consul, and many other merchants, and almost with all of his household. We had with us three Janissaries⁵⁷ to guard us, so that we were in all about fifty cavaliers, well mounted upon asses, taking with us provisions sufficient for three days.

When we came to the pyramids, and had observed exactly everything:

<1.> I took notice that the place where they stood was a burying place. This is plain to any that see the place, and doubtless it was the burying place of the old city Memphis, for all the Arabian histories inform us that this city stood where the pyramids now are over against old Cairo.

2. I took notice that all the pyramids have an entrance that leads to a low alley, which is very long, and at the end is a chamber, where the ancient Egyptians did place the bodies of those persons, for whom the pyramids were built. This entrance is not to be seen in every one of the pyramids, because the wind has closed them off with sand. I saw upon some of them some hieroglyphic characters, but I had no time to write them out.

3. I took notice that all the pyramids were built in a very good order, and that

⁵⁶ The pyramids of Cheops, Chephren and Mykerinos at Giza near Cairo.

⁵⁷ Next to the Jannissaries being part of the infantry of the military, they were installed as guardians of the walls, gates and citadel of Cairo. Often they are called *Mustahfeẓân* meaning 'guardian'. S.J. Shaw, *The financial and administrative organization and development of Ottoman Egypt, 1517-1798* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 189.

each of the greatest were at the head of the lesser, which are not well distinguished, because of the heaps of sand. One may yet imagine, to see this place, that in former ages there have been here hundred pyramids, little and great.

4. I took notice that they are all built upon an even rock, covered over with white sand, so that it is very probable that the stones have been taken from the place, and not brought from far, as some travellers imagine, and old writers, for the greatest is nothing but a rock cut as a pyramid, and covered over with a wall of stone.

5. I took notice that all of the stones of the greatest, there is scarce one entire, but either worn out with the weather and time, or broken by some other accident, so that though one may ascend on all sides the top, yet not in all places with the same ease.

6. I have taken notice that none of the pyramids are alike, or perfectly square, but that all have two sides longer than the others. I intended to measure the greatest. For that purpose I had with me a string of about thirty land yards⁵⁸, but because the winds have heaped about it mountains of sand, I could not possibly draw a line straight from one angle to the other.

April 28th, 1672⁵⁹

On the 28th day of April I went to see the pyramids the third time with some strangers. In our way we were mightily troubled with a very thick mist, which lasted till ten o'clock in the morning, and we found a great deal of mud in the trenches and ditches, which was not yet dry since the retreat of the river, so that we were carried over upon the Moors' backs that were with us.⁶⁰

<1.> At this time I went up to the top of the great pyramid, and I observed, as at the first, that the place where the pyramids stand, is a pure rock, covered over with white sand, which appears sufficiently by the ditches and caves round about the pyramids cut in the rock.

2. The rock is to be seen, upon which stands the greatest pyramid⁶¹, by a hole at one of the angles, between the east and north sides.

⁵⁸ Approximately 27,4 metres.

⁵⁹ The date as printed in the original text states December 28th. However, this must be an error as the fourth visit to the pyramids (below) took place at an earlier date. It should therefore be presumed that the correct date is April 28th. The French version of the journal has the same error.

⁶⁰ The term 'Moor' was usually used as a name for a Muslim of North-Western Arab or Berber ancestry. J.R. Baker, *Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), p.226.

⁶¹ The pyramid of Cheops.

3. The pyramids are not built with marble, as some say, but with a white sandy stone, very hard.

4. The greatest has but two hundred and six steps, and though monsieur Th.⁶² said that it has two hundred and eight, this proceeds from his not taking notice that two steps are broken into four.

5. On the top of the greatest pyramid there was anciently a statue, or colossus. This appears because it is not sharp as the others, but plain. And there are yet to be seen great pits, which were to keep fast the colossus from falling.

At the present there is nothing on the top but many letters of the names of persons of all nations, who have left them to witness that they had been there. There is no sign of the play of Mancala⁶³, which a Coptie told me was there imprinted⁶⁴ in the days of the Pharaohs.

6. The stones of the biggest pyramid are not equal, for some of the under most are four feet high, some three feet and a half, and five feet long. The stones of the middle are three feet and five inches high, and the uppermost stones are but two feet high, and three and a half long.

7. The sides of the pyramids are not equal, for in the greatest is visible, and so in the others, that the north side is longer than that which stretches from east to west.

8. In all the pyramids there are very deep wells cut in the rock, square, as I have seen in more than ten.

May 4th, 1672⁶⁵

On the 4th day of May I went the fourth time to see the pyramids, in the company of monsieur Sabatery, vice-consul of Alexandria.

I went up this time to the top of the highest pyramid.⁶⁶ I entered into the chamber, but saw no new thing which could cause me either to change, or to add to

⁶² Wansleben is referring to the French traveller Jean de Thevénot, who published his *Relation d'un voyage fait au Levant* in 1664.

⁶³ Mancala the umbrella term for board games. *Mancala*: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mancala>. (12-06-2014).

⁶⁴ Or carved into the stone.

⁶⁵ Again, the date is an error, this time as June 26th. This date is simply not possible, as Wansleben would have been in Alexandria at that time according to his journal. After his description of Saqqara he mentions to have returned from Giza and Saqqara on the 6th of May, after having left two days ago. This would mean May 4th is the correct date. The French edition of the journal has the same error and even has the year 1673 printed behind the date. This year is altogether impossible following the other dates in the journal.

⁶⁶ The pyramid of Cheops.

my former observations. It is needless to speak of its dimensions, seeing so many travellers have already published them, as monsieur Thevénot in his Levant travels.⁶⁷

From the pyramids we went to take a view of the caves that are adjoining. There are many, all cut in the side of a rock. Their outsides are out of order, without any proportion, but their inside very equal and polished. In every one there is a deep well⁶⁸ square, cut in the rock, where the Egyptians did put the body of that person for whom the cave was made, for it was their sepulchre. The walls of many of these caves are full of hieroglyphic figures, carved in the rock. In some they are but small, in others very lively. In one I numbered sixteen great figures, that represent eight men and eight women, holding one another by the hands, with many other small figures, or shapes on both sides.

Of the sphinx

We saw next the sphinx, near the pyramids, on the east side. On the top stands the head of a woman of extraordinary bigness and height. The Arabians call it *Abul-hon*, or *Abul-houl*.⁶⁹

Pliny said that it was the tomb of King Amasis. I imagine that this sphinx was a sepulchre, but we cannot understand that it belonged to Amasis, for all the records and traditions of this sphinx are lost.

That it is a tomb may appear first by its situation, which is in a place which was in former ages a burying place, and near the pyramids and mortuary caves. Secondly, it is to be imagined that it was a sepulchre from its building. In the hinder part is a cave underground, of a bigness answerable to that of the head, into which I have looked by an entrance that leads into it, so that it could serve no other purpose but to keep a dead corpse.

Some Francs⁷⁰ have, out of an excess of curiosity, climbed up by the means of rope-ladders, to see whether this head was hollow, or massive, and they have found it to be hollow, but filled at present with sand.

The neck is worn out round about, which caused men to imagine that it will not be able to support the weight of the great head.

⁶⁷ J. de Thevénot, *Relation d'un voyage fait au Levant* (Paris: L. Billaine, 1665), pp. 241-254.

⁶⁸ In this context a shaft or pit cut in the surface, without any water being present.

⁶⁹ Egyptian for 'father of terror'.

⁷⁰ This term is used for people from Western Europe.

Of the wells where the mummies are

June 26th and 27th, 1672

When we had fully viewed this sphinx, we took the road that leads to Saqqara, a village, at four hours travelling from the pyramids, and about eight from Cairo towards the south. The burying place of the mummies is near adjoining to this village.

And because it was very late, and that we were to agree with the Arabians of the village about the price, the number and quality of the wells that they were to open for us. We stopped there all night, and the next morning we took with us twelve horse-men to guard us, of the Arabians.⁷¹ With them we went to this burying place, where the mummies are in caves under the ground.⁷²

The first well that we saw was that of birds embalmed. When we had caused the sand that covered the wells to be removed, through which we were to go down, and from thence to enter into the cave, we caused ourselves to be let down one after another, by tying a double rope around our waists. As soon as we were at the bottom, and that everyone had lighted his taper, and several matches that we had brought, we went into the cave creeping upon our bellies. The cave is an alley in the rock, about the height of a man, and about the breadth of a perch⁷³, and of an extraordinary length. We found there many others alleys on both hands, cut into the rock where were many large stores, full of earthen pots, covered over with coverings of the same substance. In these pots were embalmed birds of all kinds, every bird in its own pot. And as I thought that the remembrance of a custom so ancient, and superstitious, was worthy of our notice, I brought about half a dozen with me. Some I have sent to the King's library.⁷⁴ We found also some hens eggs, empty, but entire without any ill smell or crack.

When we had viewed sufficiently this cave, we returned up in the same manner that we went down, and found another opened, called the virgin, which is, that was never opened before. According to our orders to the Arabians, monsieur de Tiger⁷⁵ and the others went down in the same manner as into the former. I alone could not follow them, because of a quartan fever which had troubled me fourteen months, and

⁷¹ A term generally used for Bedouins. Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 4.

⁷² The northern falcon catacomb, the northern ibis catacomb or the southern ibis catacomb.

⁷³ A perch is a different name for a French rod. There were three different rods in use: the 'perche royal' (5,5 metres), the 'perche ordinaire' (6,1 metres) and the 'perche d'arpent' (6,7 metres).

⁷⁴ The Royal Library of Louis XIV.

⁷⁵ Ambroise de Tiger, French consul of Cairo.

took me at that very moment. But I lost nothing by that, for these gentlemen told me at their return that they found a horrid stench and a close air that put out their candles and their matches also, every time that they endeavoured to light them, which caused them to get up again without entering further. They told me that this well was much deeper than the former.

We caused another to be opened, which was not a virgin well, as the former, because it was not so deep. I ventured into that, notwithstanding my indisposition.

We found there two mummies, a great one and a little one of a child, both in coffins, the greatest was of marble. Upon the covering it had the likeness of the person for whom it was made. We caused the biers, or coffins, to be opened, but found nothing extraordinary, therefore we made no account of them, and left them where we found them.

We went down next into a cave, called The Church, which was not so deep as the former. It was nothing but a long alley underground, well plastered, and painted all over with hieroglyphic figures round all the sides. It was almost full of sand, which caused us to creep along upon our knees.

If the reader desires a prospect, and a description of this ancient burying place, let him think upon a boundless plain, even and covered with sand, where neither trees, nor grass, nor houses, nor any such thing is to be seen. Let him represent to himself the superficies of this large field full of dry bones and arms, legs, feet and heads, full of scattered pieces of wood of coffins, of little idols, some of wood, others of plaster embellished with green, and marked before and behind with hieroglyphic letters⁷⁶. These idols the Arabians have taken from the broken mummies, which they have cast away. In some places you may see great tombstones, full of ciphers and enigmatical figures that represent something of chemistry, and of other sciences and mysteries, and full of strange characters that are no hieroglyphs. While I was looking upon this spectacle the Arabians brought me two, whereof I caused the copies to be drawn as soon as I returned to Cairo.⁷⁷

You have here a description of some relics of the grandeur and vanity of the ancient Egyptians, and the mournful signs of a man's mortality. The first sight is able to dash a person newly arrived, out of countenance, and to affright him. I mean the

⁷⁶ These little idols are called 'shabtis'. They were placed inside the tomb of the deceased to work for him in the afterlife.

⁷⁷ See figures 7 and 8 in the appendix for the drawings of these two stela. Contrary to Wansleben's assumption the characters are hieroglyphic. The signs at the top of the stela of figure 8 are probably Coptic.

sight of so many bones all scattered up and down, one would think that here has been a grievous fight.

In this plain, or field, here are fifteen pyramids. Three are of extraordinary bigness, which seem to have been favoured by time, for they appear entire without much decay. Here is also an entrance in every one, that shows a long alley which leads to the chamber. Monsieur de Tiger went into that which is farthest from the village, commonly named the pyramid of Rodope, where he found nothing in the chamber.⁷⁸

This pyramid is built as a pavilion. The Francs say that Rodope, a famous strumpet, caused it to be built with the money that she had gotten with the loss of her honour. But this is doubtless an error, if it be true what Pliny said, that the pyramid of Rodope was small but very beautiful, therefore this which is one of the greatest in all Egypt cannot be that of Rodope. These are the words of Pliny:

Supremumque illud ne quis Regum opes miretur, minimam extitisse
laudatissimam à Rodope meretricula factam. Æsopi fabularum Philosophi
conserva quondam, & contubernalis hac fuit, majore miraculo tantas opes
meretrico esse conquisitas.⁷⁹

For the others that are in the same field, time has almost worn them out, for they are but so many heaps of sand, which have scarce the shape and the shadow of what they have been heretofore.

Here is also a square heap of very great hewn stones. The Arabians name it Mastabet Faraoun, for they say that when the Pharaoh's, Kings of Egypt, were to declare and give a new law to the people, they stood upon the top of this heap. But these are the traditions of the poor Arabians, that have nothing of certainty.⁸⁰

To return to the wells of the mummies: as soon as the Francs have visited any, the wind, or the Arabians, fill the entry again full of sand, to get a little money at the second opening. This is the greatest gain of these wretches. The least they take to

⁷⁸ The pyramid of Djoser.

⁷⁹ "But the crowning marvel of all is, that the smallest, but most admired of them, that we may feel no surprise at the opulence of the kings, was built by Rhodopis, a courtesan! This woman was once the fellow-slave of Æsopus the philosopher and fabulist, and the sharer of his bed; but what is much more surprising is, that a courtesan should have been enabled, by her vocation, to amass such enormous wealth." J. Bostok (ed.), *Pliny the Elder. The natural history*:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D36%3Achapter%3D17>. (22-05-2014).

⁸⁰ The mastaba of King Shepseskaf.

open a virgin well is thirty piasters, because they that make the well to be opened, have the liberty to carry away all the curiosities and mummies that he finds there.

Of a hieroglyphic stone in a Jews house

June 16th, 1672

On the 16th of this month I went to a Jews house, with an intention to buy of him a curious hieroglyphic stone that stands at the threshold of his door. It is about an ell and a-half long, and about a feet broad⁸¹, of a marble colour, upon which are graven three lines of hieroglyphic letters in very small characters, which are to be read from the left hand to the right.

This stone was desired by monsieur Thevénot, who endeavoured to buy it. He offered, as I was told, thirty piasters to this Jew for it, but the other asked a hundred.

All the people of the Levant have the foolish custom to raise the price of their commodities when they see that a Franc desires anything, though it were but a trifle, the others desire makes them think it to be invaluable. They prize it therefore at such a rate that none dare meddle with it. They are so simple to suffer the commodity to lie upon their hands and spoil, rather than they sell it to a Franc at the same rate that they would give it to a man of the Levant.

Nevertheless I expected that the Jew had changed his mind by that time. I offered him the same price that this Franc had offered before, but when I saw that my offer rendered him more proud, resolved in first demand, I never troubled him afterwards.

Of the pillar of Pompey, and of the caves that are near Alexandria, not far from it

June 21st, 1672

The 21st of June I went to see the pillar of Pompey⁸², and other rarities thereabouts, in the company of monsieur Truillard, the elder, a French merchant, and the Janissary that belongs to the vice-consul. We went out at the gate called Bab issidr, where this pillar stands upon a little hill towards the south.

When I drew near, I took notice that it leaned on one side, whereas eight years

⁸¹ Approximately 1 by 0,3 metres.

⁸² A remnant of the Roman Serapeum built by Diocletian.

before it stood very straight when I saw it. The cause of this are the Arabians, who out of persuasion of some great treasure hid under, have dug and undermined it, and have drawn out of its foundation many great heaps of stones that held it up. This caused it to lean a little on that side. They had overthrown it, had they not found at the bottom stones of a fearful bigness, and so great that neither they nor anybody else was able to draw them out.

The description and the dimensions of this pillar are found in the book of monsieur Thevénot.⁸³ Therefore I say no more of it here, because I will not stuff this book with ordinary things, mentioned before in other travels.

After we had well viewed this pillar, we marched along the Calitz, as far as the place that is over against the city walls, to observe the passage of the waters. We went with this design to the other side of the Calitz, over a little bridge that is near it. When we came to the little arches that are under the walls, through which the river enters into the city, we made our observations, and took next the way that that leads to the caves that are in the fields at West-South-West of the gate out of which we came, and about a quarter of a league in our way towards the Lake Sebaca we came to the caves, having left at West-North-West a mosque, in a plain field, where was buried a certain sheikh of the Moors, called Sidi Gams il Gábbari.

At our entrance we went down a dozen steps into a very large alley, dug in the rock, but open a top. It may be the vault is fallen by length of time. In this alley are fifteen great holes cut in the rock, in the fashion of great gates. Seven are on the right hand, and eight on the left through which men enter into the caves.⁸⁴

We went into four with our torches lighted, our Janissary before us. We found round about the walls, in the firm rock, from the top to the bottom, holes cut in the rock very orderly, and of a length and breadth fit to hold a coffin. Many of these caves were cut, to open a way to others. This inconveniency we found there, they were almost filled up with earth and sand, which caused us to kneel for the most part. This did not hinder us from taking notice of that which was most remarkable. While we were in one, at the end of the alley, one of our company perceived, with the light of his tapers, that one of the holes opened a passage to another cave, which caused us to see whether there was not there anything worthy of our notice. Though the hole was but small and narrow, we crept in upon our bellies with our lighted tapers, and one

⁸³ Thevénot, *Relation d'un voyage*, pp. 227-228.

⁸⁴ Fort Saleh in the Gabbari necropolis.

after the other we came to the other side, where we found the most strange and most curious caves that we had ever seen. It was greater, more complete, and cleaner than any of the others. Built long and square, and well plastered with lime. At each side of the wall, which is the main rock, there are three ranks of holes, like to those we had seen in the former. In the longer sides were fifteen in every rank, placed one a top of the other. In all they were forty-five. The two ends, or sides, that were shortest, had likewise three ranks, and three holes at every rank, nine in all. They were all empty and clean, and no ill scent in all the cave. Unless it be in one hole, where we saw the skeleton of the body of a man dried up.

I conceive that the learned may desire my judgment concerning these caves and holes, and to what purpose they were made. To this I answer that it is not easy to give a just account of them, because Maqrizi⁸⁵, who has spoken of all the remarkable things of Egypt, makes no mention of these caves. Nevertheless it is easy to be seen that they could be for no other use, but to bury and place the dead. This may be gathered from the fashion of the holes, which are just as long as high, and as large as needs must to place a bier or a coffin. Besides, all the other caves in Egypt were only for that purpose. It is therefore very probable that this was for no other purpose. Let the reader think what he pleases of them.

I do not deny but that they may have served the Christians to meet together, and pray God in secret, for fear of the heathens that persecuted them. I find this opinion in Said ibn Patrik, a patriarch of Alexandria, in his history, p. 399.⁸⁶

The inhabitants of Alexandria name these caves *sísk*, or the market place, but there is no likelihood that they have been employed for that use.

The rock in which they are cut, is much eaten and consumed by time. The holes are likewise much decayed, chiefly those that are nearest to the door, and in the open air. They receive some light from above, through little square holes that are made on purpose in the vaults.

⁸⁵ Ahmed al-Maqrizi, *Mawaiz wa al-'Tibar bi dhikr al-khitat wa al-'athar*, which at the time of Wansleben's visit was only available in manuscript. The text was translated into French by Urbain Bouriant, *Description topographique et historique de l'Égypte*, (Paris: Leroux, 1895-1900).

⁸⁶ Better known as Said ibn al-Batriq or Eutychius, who was patriarch of Alexandria in the tenth century AD. He wrote the elaborate chronicle *Ketāb al-tārīkh al-majmū' 'alā'l-tahqīq wa'l-taṣḍīq* or *Nazm al-jawhar* (Hs.Sinait. Arab. 582) which was expanded by later writers. S.H. Griffith, 'Eutychius of Alexandria', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/eutychius>. (15-08-2014).

Of Heliopolis

July 12th, 1672

The 12th of July I went in the company of some French merchants, to the village of El Matarieh, situated on the east of Cairo, about two hours riding on horseback, to visit the places which Christ and his most holy Mother have sanctified with their abode, and the garden where the Balm plants were set formerly.

[...]

We went out of the garden to see the needle, which is out of the village, planted in the open field, where stood anciently the city Heliopolis.⁸⁷

This needle is not equally square, for there are two sides larger than the other. The largest are each of six feet, and the narrowest of five and a half.⁸⁸ There are but a few characters graven upon it, but they be yet to be read. And those that are graven in one side, are also in the three others. It is of a red stone, as all other needles that I have seen in Egypt, planted upon the ground without any basis to stand upon.

Near this needle is a square stone of an extraordinary bigness, which seems to have been the basis of some great pillar. But it is worn on the sides, therefore I neglected to take the measure of it.

Of the Faiyum

July 22nd/23rd, 1672⁸⁹

The ancient town of Arsinoe, situated near Faiyum⁹⁰, on the north-east side, is now totally ruined. There remains nothing of it now, but a great many mountains very high raised, with the ruins and rubbish of the town. They show sufficiently, that it was

⁸⁷ The obelisk of Sesostris I.

⁸⁸ Approximately 1,8 and 1,7 metres.

⁸⁹ The manuscript does not mention the exact date, but according to the context of the journey it should be the 22nd or the 23rd of July 1672.

⁹⁰ Whenever Wansleben mentions the name "Faiyum" he is pointing to the city Faiyum, and not to the Faiyum province as a whole.

one of the greatest and most glorious cities of Egypt. The people of the country call it, Medinet Fares, or the Town of the Persian, but I could never understand the cause of this name.⁹¹

They say that it was destroyed and burned by cats, which the enemies set into it when they had tied fire brands at their tails, which scattered the fire into every corner of the city, and burned it to ashes.

July 29th, 1672

The 29th of the same month I went to Biahmu, a village about half a league⁹² from Faiyum towards the north, to see an ancient thing: the body of a great statue of a giant, of a red stone, without head or arms, standing upon a basis. The statue is behind the village, in a great broad road.⁹³

I could never learn what it is, because the country people have no tradition of it, and in the histories of Egypt there is no mention made of it. I have only learned that the people of the country call it the statue of the Pharaoh, which I think not to be true, because it is the custom of the Egyptians to entitle all things of an extraordinary bigness with the name of Pharaoh, from a conceit that they have they were all giants.

The basis of this statue is square, of hewn stones that are very great, every stone has two feet and a half in breadth, and almost ten feet in length. The fore-front has five perches in length, that is about thirty feet.⁹⁴

Near this basis five others stand in a demi-circle, but less, and without any statue upon them.

[...]

When we had well seen these things, we returned to the town, and in our way we

⁹¹ Krokodilopolis or Medinet el-Faiyum.

⁹² Approximately 2,4 kilometres.

⁹³ A statue of King Amenemhat III.

⁹⁴ Approximately 0,8 by 3 metres. The fore-front is approximately 9,1 metres. A perch is a different name for a French rod. The 5 perches are either the 'perche royal' (5,5 metres), the 'perche ordinaire' (6,1 metres) and the 'perche d'arpent' (6,7 metres). Whatever the case the equation of 5 perches against thirty feet is erroneous. However, this mistake was not made by Wansleben but by the translator, one M.D.. According to the French publication the correct length is five *toises* instead of five perches. One *toise* is approximately 1,8 metres, making the length 9 metres.

went over the ruins of the ancient Arsinoe, where I saw nothing remarkable, but some old walls which my guide told me were the remains of a bath.

When we come near the town, we left it on the left hand, and went to see the needle of Begig, whereof this is the description.⁹⁵

The needle is placed on the ground, without any basis, in the middle of a corn field, in a place where is no house, nor mark of any that has been there.

It is distant from Faiyum about a long half league⁹⁶, near a village called Begig, from whence it borrows the name. This village is situated on the south-west of Faiyum, and belongs unto it.

It is built in a long square, very high. Its largest sides have six feet, and the narrowest are of four.⁹⁷ This needle abuts not into a sharp point, as others in Egypt and Italy, but the top is made like an ass's back. On the south side, which is one of the largest, there are three ranks of images, that represent men and women holding one another by the hand. Under these three ranks begin fourteen ranks of hieroglyphic characters, about the bigness of a finger, which are to be read from the top to the bottom. Every rank is divided from the other, which is near, with a line that is drawn between, all along the needle. So that without doubt this needle is the most curious that may be seen. In everyone of the lesser sides is but one rank of lesser characters, which yet continue very clear and beautiful.

There is one thing to be lamented at, that time has almost blotted out the figures from the middle of the pillar to the bottom, and that the stones have not been able to defend themselves from corruption, being much worn out. It is of a red stone, as all others.

Its top is like an ass's back, and very large, fit for the vultures and hawks to pitch upon it at night. These birds have so whitened it with their dung, that the uppermost figures are scarce to be discerned.

I have taken notice that all the needles that I have seen in Egypt stand not upon any basis, but upon the ground, which makes me believe that the invention of planting them upon a basis is not derived from the Egyptians, but from the Romans. Who, having taken notice that this kind of pillar was very useful and contained great mysteries in their characters, they have raised them upon a basis, to render them

⁹⁵ The obelisk of Sesostris I, now located in Medinet el-Faiyum.

⁹⁶ Approximately 2,4 kilometres.

⁹⁷ Approximately 1,8 by 1,2 metres.

more remarkable and considerable to the curious. We returned to the town about noon.

A little journey to Sinnuris

July 31st, 1672

In an evening I walked to see the Lake Qarun, which is very near Sinnuris, on the west side.⁹⁸

[...]

On the other side of the lake are deserts of sand very large. I have heard from persons worthy to be believed, that there are to be seen many remarkable ruins of ancient towns, particularly of Dimeh el-Siba, or of Dimeh of Lions.⁹⁹ A town so named because the statues of lions that were there to be seen.

They told me that they had seen the Labyrinth which is at the end of the lake westerly, mentioned by Pliny, when he said, "There was a Labyrinth in the lake of Mareotis, built without any wood".¹⁰⁰ This Labyrinth is named now by the Egyptians, Qasr Qarun, or the castle of vizier Caron, a famous lord in the histories of the Arabians, because his treasures which are said to be here buried, and kept by dreadful talismans. They tell me that this castle had three-hundred and threescore and five chambers, so entangled one into the other that a man cannot get out, if when he comes in he does not take notice of the way.¹⁰¹

A walk to the pyramids of Hawara

August 4th, 1672

Between the towns of Faiyum and Benesuef, which are distant the one from the other about a little day's journey, there are two great pyramids. The one is near Faiyum, the

⁹⁸ Lake Moeris.

⁹⁹ The Ptolemaic town Soknopaiou Nesos.

¹⁰⁰ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, xxxvi.19.84-90.

¹⁰¹ The Greco-Roman site Dionysias.

other nearer to Benesuef. The first is named Haram Hawara, the pyramid of Hawara. The other Haram Illahun, the pyramid of Illahun.¹⁰²

Thursday, the 4th of August, I went to that of Hawara, so called from the neighbouring village Hawara. It stands about an hour and a half walking from Faiyum, on the south side, situated in a sandy wilderness, like that which is over against Cairo, where the pyramids stand. When we were gone beyond a certain bridge of brick, very old, which is upon the highway of Benesuef, we left it to take a shorter course, but we found cause to repent it, because the way was craggy and full of sand.

We were obliged to go through the *Bahr Belame*, or the river without water, which caused us to endure much trouble and fear, in regard of the dept that was extraordinary, and our being forced to climb up again. And when we had overcome all these difficulties, and were near the pyramid, about six-hundred paces from it we met with a ditch of the river of Joseph, full of water. We could not get over it, but were forced to stay on that side, and from there take a view at a distance of the pyramid, to my great displeasure. I took notice that in its elevation and breadth it was much like the second pyramid which is at Giza, but the length of time has almost reduced it to dust, so that it appears like a sharp mountain of sand, rather than a pyramid.

The desert where it stands, is like that of the mummies which is near Saqqara. Some wells of mummies are here to be found, whereof the entry is filled up with sand, and some are half empty. Upon the ground are scattered, here and there, bones of mummies, broken wood, and pieces of coffins, so that one may say that it is altogether like that of Saqqara.

But because we were without any guide, and my Janissary was a very coward, having none but him with me, he alarmed me several times with the fear of the Arabians. Besides, our beasts were tired with the deep way. I therefore constrained to set bounds to my curiosity, and return to the town, passing through the river without water, near its mouth, leaving on our left hand, near the pyramid of Hawara, the ruins of an ancient town, whereof I could never understand the name. And a little further, on the same side, the village of Hawara, from whence the pyramid borrows the name, and at a little distance from this village, a very ancient bridge, and very high, which is made to give a passage to the river Nile when it overflows. We returned to Faiyum about noon.

For the other pyramid, called of Illahun, the Arabian historians say that

¹⁰² The pyramid of Amenemhat III at Hawara, and the pyramid of Sesostris II at Illahun.

Joseph, Jacob's son caused it to be built. It is so named from the village Illahun, near adjoining, belonging to the kāshiflik¹⁰³ of Benesuef. But because I could not look upon it, but at a distance, I cannot well describe it. The reader may see what Maqrizi said of it.¹⁰⁴

A voyage into lower Thebes

April 3rd, 1673

April the third, being Monday in Easter week, I went to the ancient town of Ansina, called in the Coptic dictionaries Antinoe, and Thebes.¹⁰⁵

I went to see first the tomb of Mahomet Bey, a Bey of Girge, about fourteen years ago.¹⁰⁶

[...]

When I had seen this tomb, I walked into the town, and the first thing that I took notice of, as a great antiquity, was the pillar of Marcus Aurelius.¹⁰⁷ Its bottom is about five feet¹⁰⁸, the four uppermost are all even, and the fifth below is adorned with carved leaves. In the basis is a Greek inscription containing thirteen lines.

I saw near this pillar the pieces of three others, very much resembling this, but broken down. There was nothing of them standing but the basis of one.

From the pillar I went to see the Arch of Triumph, which is almost all standing. I took a delight to climb up to it by a little pair of stairs winding up the wall of the arch, containing fifty steps, or thereabouts. I rested myself at the greatest window, which is upon the chief vault, where I had the satisfaction to discover all its ruins, and the situation of this town, heretofore so famous.

¹⁰³ The territory of a kāshif.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Ahmed al-Maqrizi, *Description topographique et historique de l'Égypte*, p. 737. Clearly Wansleben did not consult Maqrizi, as he only mentions the name of Illahun once, but does not discuss it any further.

¹⁰⁵ Medinet Ansina or Shekh Abadah with the remains of a village founded by emperor Hadrian.

¹⁰⁶ Muhammad Bey, a Mamluk governor of the city Jirja (or Girge as Wansleben calls it) in 1659. He was defeated during a rebellion by Mehmet Pasha Ghazi. Winter, *Egyptian society*, p. 36.

¹⁰⁷ The remains of a portico erected for Marcus Aurelius, or Alexander Severus.

¹⁰⁸ Approximately 1,5 metres.

This arch is alone, and altogether separated from the other ruins, and about four paces from the river Nile. But for want of an inscription, none knows for whom, and by whom it had been raised. It is not enriched with carved works, as those of Orange and Rome. Nevertheless it is one of the most beautiful that I have ever seen.

One of its fronts has forty-eight feet in breadth, and one of its sides twenty-four. The great vault in the middle, which is between two little ones, about sixteen feet broad, and each of the little ones seven feet. The thickness of the wall which is between the great and the little vaults, which is but one stone, is of six feet and two inches. The thickness which is between the little vault and the outward angle of the arch is of five feet.¹⁰⁹ The front that looks towards the Nile is one the south-east side.

There are yet fourteen pillars of marble on the left hand of this arch, in a straight line towards the river. Some of them have their capitals, others have lost them. Some are joined to the huts of some Arabians that dwell there. On the same side, towards the monastery of Der Abu Hennis, are to be seen three beautiful pillars of Porphyry standing. Some of them have their tops, a fourth lies along the ground nearby.

Of the Vadigamus

April 4th, 1673

Tuesday the fourth of April, I went with my ordinary guide to see the Vadigamus, and the caves that are there.¹¹⁰ Vadigamus is a narrow Valley between two mountains, which are as high as one another, and flat on the top. This valley is like a bugle, from whence I believe it borrowed the name, for the word Vadigamus signifies the Valley of the Bugle. At the beginning it has a large entrance, which answers to a great sandy plain, which is at one side of the monastery of Der Abu Hennis. It stretches itself southwards, about half an hour's travelling over. Afterwards it rises by degrees to the top of the mountains, where it unites and joins them, and represents the bottom of a sack.

On both sides of these two mountains that face one another, are two ranks of caves, each rank containing fifty caves, or thereabouts, which make one hundred

¹⁰⁹ The front is approximately 14,6 by 7,3 metres. The middle vault measures, according to Wansleben, approximately 4,9 metres, the little ones 2,1 metres. The thickness as described of the wall between the large vault and the smaller vaults corresponds to approximately 1,9 metres. The thickness of the wall between the little vaults and the outer wall corresponds to 1,5 metres.

¹¹⁰ The Pharaonic quarries in one of the wadis surrounding Der Abu Hennis and Der el Bersha.

caves upon each mountain. I entered into some of them that were so high that three long pikes tied to one another would not have reached the top. They are very large, but without order within, and uneven, and not perfectly square.

I have wondered at the capricious designs of the ancient Egyptians, to make such wide caves so high, and so numerous, yielding so little convenience to the inhabitants, for they are made upon the steep mountains of sand, far from towns and water, dug in the dark and main rocks. If I had not pursued the history of Said ibn Patrik¹¹¹, who said that the Pharaohs, kings of Egypt, employed the Israelites in digging in these mountains, I should be of the opinion of the country people, who believe that all these caves have been made by devils, who have been thereunto forced by conjurers. This art having been always much practiced in Egypt, for one would not think it is possible for men to make them. And I dare say, that when a traveller has seen all the curiosities of Egypt, if he has not seen these mountains and caves of the province of Thebes, he has seen nothing.

Of Ansina

April 5th, 1673

Wednesday the fifth of the month, I went again to Ansina, to look upon its ruins with more exactness, and chiefly upon the pillars that stand before Abulkerun¹¹², on the north-west side.

There are in all four before the front of this palace, which heretofore was very magnificent, but now there remains but little, encompassed about with the ruins. Two of these pillars are on the one side of the door, and two on the other. Three are yet standing, only a third part of the fourth appears.

They are made of a certain white sandy stone, which is taken out of the mountains near this town. They are hollow on the sides, from the bottom to the middle, but the rest upwards is smooth. The bottom or bulk is nigh thirteen feet about, their capitals are of two pieces, seven feet in diameter. Every bottom is of five pieces, and every piece is seven feet long.¹¹³

¹¹¹ S. Ibn Patrik, *Ketāb al-tārīkh al-majmū‘ ‘alā’l-taḥqīq wa’l-taṣḍīq* or *Naẓm al-jawhar* §1-8, 1 r^o-4 v^o.

¹¹² The name “Abulkerun” seems to have been used by travellers in the days of Wansleben, for a monument which they believed to be the remains of an ancient palace, however it is unclear what they exactly referred to.

¹¹³ Approximately 2,1 metres.

There was behind this palace, on the south-east side, four other pillars of the same bigness, form and substance, but they are overthrown. I could scarce discern where their basis stood. The pillar of Marcus Aurelius stands on the north-west side of this old palace.

The same day I went again to see the pillar of Marcus Aurelius. Its basis is thirteen feet high, made up with eight ranks of stone. The first and the lowest is half in the ground, and half out. The second is two feet high, the third a feet and eight inches, the fourth, fifth and sixth, upon which is the inscription, each two feet and two inches. The seventh bends out, the eight is the immediate basis upon which the pillar stands. This basis is five feet long, and two feet and ten inches high. It is square in the bottom, in the middle octagon, or of eight angles, and the top oval. Upon this stone is the bottom of the pillar, which is made up of five pieces, the lowermost is beautified with oaken leaves carved in the stone. I have never seen the like elsewhere. It is three feet and a half high, the four other pieces are of seven feet each, and three inches long. The diameter of the pillar is of three feet and seven inches. The capital is of one stone, three feet and an inch high. The circumference is of seven feet. Upon the capital stands an unpolished stone, four feet and two inches long, and three feet high.¹¹⁴

I perceived that in this town heretofore there have been two streets more remarkable than the others. One begun at the Abulkerun, and ended at the four pillars of Marcus Aurelius, stretching from east to north. This street was adorned with two ranks of pillars, one rank in each side. The second begins at the Arch of Triumph, which is at one end of the town, at the south-east, drawing to the north-east. These streets are very long, large, straight, and full of ruins of stately palaces.

[...]

In Ansina, as well as the caves of the mountains round about, are to be seen in the

¹¹⁴ All these measurements in metres are approximately as follows. The basis of the pillar of Marcus Aurelius: 4 metres. The second basis: 0,6 metres. The third basis: 0,4 metres. The fourth, fifth and sixth bases 0,7 metres. The eighth basis: 1,5 by 0,9 metres. The bottom of the pillar: 1 metre. The other four pieces of the pillar: 2,2 metres. The diameter of the pillar: 1,1 metres. The capital : 1 metre. The circumference: 2,1 metres. The unpolished stone upon the capital: 1,3 by 0,9 metres.

ground great pots, in which the ancient inhabitants of this province kept their wines. They have an ear at each side, and are sharp at the bottom, that they might be fixed in the ground. My guide found many, which he brought to me, but the wine was dried within, and as black as pitch. I have sent two of them to Paris.

Of the hieroglyphic cave

April 7th, 1673

The seventh of April, the Good-Friday of the Copts, I went with my guide to see the caves that are near the monastery of Amba Bishoi, about a mile¹¹⁵ from the convent, towards the south.¹¹⁶

The first remarkable thing that I saw was the hieroglyphic cave, which the country people commonly call the church. I conceive this mistake proceeds from the crosses which are painted everywhere within.¹¹⁷

To go into this cave one must pass through another before it. This was heretofore very beautiful and great, but now it is much decayed. The top is fallen down. There remains nothing but the two side-walls, full of hieroglyphic figures graven in the rock. Some are great, others are little, others are of a moderate size, but all very clean in good order.

From thence is a passage into the hieroglyphic cave, which I believe was a temple of the heathens. It is square, very smooth within, cut into the rock, four perches long, three perches and one foot broad, and two perches high.¹¹⁸ The door that leads into it is four feet and a half large.¹¹⁹ In this cave, over against the door, is a hole in the wall, of a perch and a foot deep, and four feet broad, and a perch and one foot and eight inches high.¹²⁰ This cave is full of images in the walls, and above, which represent their sciences by emblems, and hieroglyphic characters in their language round about. The colours of them are so beautiful and lively, that I could not but wonder how they could continue so fresh, during so many ages.

Besides this great number of characters there painted, are to be seen some

¹¹⁵ Approximately 1,6 kilometres.

¹¹⁶ The monastery of Amba Bishoi at Der el-Bersha, not to be confused with the monastery of Amba Bishai at Sohag.

¹¹⁷ The tomb of Djehutihotep at Der el-Bersha.

¹¹⁸ Approximately 20,1 by 15,4 by 10,1 metres.

¹¹⁹ Approximately 1,4 metres.

¹²⁰ Approximately 5,3 by 1,2 by 5,5 metres.

lines of the same little characters very clean carved in the wall, some reaching from one end to the other, others from the top to the bottom. These characters and figures are so numerous, that they are not to be drawn by any in less than a month's time.

Under these two caves there is a rank of others in the rock, very even within, but they are without figures, and less, and not so high as the former, for they are but six feet high.¹²¹ In the bottom of every cave is a well, square and deep in the rock, into which one may go down by the means of holes, or steps, made on purpose in both sides of every well. And in the bottom of every well is an alley in the rock, but because these alleys are dirty and obscure, none of our company would venture to go down. In the walls of some of these caves are square holes, six feet deep, and two feet broad¹²², about the bigness of a coffin, which makes me believe that the Egyptians did put their dead in these caves.

A little farther, towards the south, is another large cave. I saw on the left hand a hieroglyphic picture in the wall, with thirteen lines underneath, of characters cut in the picture.

From this cave, which is at the end of the mountain towards the south, we went back to the monastery of Abu Hennis, and in our way we saw all the caves that are in order upon this mountain, as far as the place where the Vadigamus begins. We saw no rarity, only some painted crosses, in red, roughly drawn, from whence we gathered that heretofore they have served as churches.

By the differing workmanship of these caves, one may easily distinguish such as have been made by the ancient Egyptians, by the Christians and the Anchorites¹²³ that caused this province to flourish. For the former are very regular, cut within, with much care and smooth, but the others are rough and irregular.

And because the country people think that there is no cave without a rich treasure, the Arabians have dug everywhere, and spoiled also the hieroglyphic cave, which is named The Church. They have so much undermined the walls that some of the top is fallen down, and the rain has spoiled some of the emblems and characters that adorned the wall. And, as if time had not blotted out enough, they have put out the eyes of the images, and figures, in a brutish manner, natural to them. I was highly

¹²¹ Approximately 1,8 metres.

¹²² Approximately 1,8 by 0,6 metres.

¹²³ The word 'anchorite', drawn from the Greek verb for 'to retire', signifies a monk who lives as a hermit.

displeased to see this, for where it not for this brutality, this beautiful cave would have kept itself entire till now.¹²⁴

Of Luxor

April 21st, 1673

Friday, the 21st of the month, we arrived at Benesuef, where we continued till the next day, and on the 24th of the month I returned to Cairo, without seeing Esna, as I had an intent.

But that the reader may know what rarities are to be seen in this town, and round about, I have here added that which has been taken notice of by Father Protais, a Capuchin, in the year 1668. According to the account given to me by the Reverend Father Francis, his brother and companion in his travels, M. Thévenot has already inserted it in his collection of travels, printed at Paris, in folio. But not so large, nor with the particulars here added.¹²⁵

[...]

About eleven leagues¹²⁶ on this side of Esna, at the east of the Nile, is to be seen El-Tod, a great town, where is a temple of the ancient Egyptians.

Twelve leagues¹²⁷ from El-Tod, at the west side of the Nile, is Armant, heretofore a great town, but now forsaken and ruined. They call it in Arabic *Beled Muse*, or the country of Moses, because the Egyptians believe that Moses was born here. Here is underground an ancient temple.¹²⁸

Two leagues¹²⁹ on this side of el-Tod are two villages very famous, namely

¹²⁴ Many quarries and tombs have been used by hermits as their living space. Egyptian depictions were often vandalized, not only because they were seen as heathen depictions, but also because they could frighten people. Damaging important functions as the eyes, nose, hands, etcetera was believed to neutralize them.

¹²⁵ P. Protais and C.-F. d'Orléans, 'Relation du voyage du Sayd, ou de le Thebayde, fait en 1668 par le P.P. Protais & Charles-François d'Orleans, Capuchins missionaries', in M. Thévenot, *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, vol. V (Paris,1663), pp. 1-4.

¹²⁶ Approximately 53,1 kilometres.

¹²⁷ Approximately 58 kilometres.

¹²⁸ The temples of Armant and El-Tod, south of Luxor, dedicated to Montu.

¹²⁹ Approximately 9,7 kilometres.

Luxor and Luxor il Kadim, or the old Luxor. They are about half a league¹³⁰ from one another.

At Luxor is to be seen the remains of an ancient, and beautiful temple of the Egyptians¹³¹, in which are threescore and eighteen pillars of a prodigious bigness, chiefly fourteen, placed in rank, two and two, so big that six men can scarce embrace them, but they are but six perches high.¹³²

The bottom of this temple is yet entire. Here are several chambers, and separations, whereof the walls are full, from the top to the bottom of figures roughly drawn, and hieroglyphic letters carved over. Before the door stands two needles, square, and very high and entire, so stretch that one would think that the workman has newly finished them. They are on every side eight feet broad.¹³³

Near their basis are two statues of women, of black marble, and though they be half underground, to the girdle, they stand out as high as three men.

Their bigness is answerable to their height, for there is twelve feet¹³⁴ from one shoulder to another. They have a strange kind of covering upon their heads, with a globe on the top. Their faces are disfigured, the rest is whole.¹³⁵

At the old Luxor is a very ancient palace.¹³⁶ Its ruins show that it has been very glorious. They say that here dwelt one of the ancient kings of Egypt. In the walks of this palace are to be seen many sphinxes, in ranks, on both sides of the alley, two feet from one another, looking upon the alley. They have every one, twenty-one feet length.¹³⁷ This palace has four walks, that answer to four gates. In the first are one hundred and twenty sphinxes, threescore in each side, and in the second are one hundred and two, fifty-one in a side. Every walk is about the length of a place to play at mall. The gates of the palace are extraordinary high, made with the most beautiful stones of the world. One of the sides of the gate is twenty-six feet high. (I find in another copy of this relation that it has thirty-six feet.)¹³⁸ The palace is so defaced that there is no order, nor beauty, that appears. Nevertheless there are so many

¹³⁰ Approximately 2,4 kilometres.

¹³¹ Commonly referred to as the temple of Luxor.

¹³² The 'perche royal' (5,5 x 6 = 33 metres), the 'perche ordinaire' (6,1 x 6 = 36,6 metres) or the 'perche d'arpent' (6,7 x 6 = 40,2 metres).

¹³³ Approximately 2,4 metres.

¹³⁴ Approximately 3,7 metres.

¹³⁵ Only the heads of the statues are damaged, but their bodies remain unharmed.

¹³⁶ The temple of Karnak.

¹³⁷ Approximately 0,6 metres apart from each other and 6,4 metres in length.

¹³⁸ Approximately 7,9 and 10,9 metres high. The account of Fathers Protais and d'Orléans has also been published by M. Thévenot, who gives a different height.

curious things in it that no man in a month can take a full view of them, for there is above a million of figures, roughly drawn, some are covered over, others appear with an open face. Here are also a great many pillars. I counted, said the Father¹³⁹, in a parlour threescore, which are all so great that five men can scarce embrace one of them about.

In the court of the palace is a basin garnished about with beautiful stones, and full of a bitter water, which, as the people say, whitens linen very well. I tried it, said the Father, by dipping in my handkerchief, which kept above four days the smell of soap. At one front of the palace are two statues of a giant, of one stone, as white as alabaster. They have swords by their sides. In the middle of the palace is another, as high as three men, not well polished, but well proportioned.

A league¹⁴⁰ on this side there is an ancient town, called Habu, where are to be seen so many rarities, chiefly mummies.¹⁴¹ At a distance one may discover two statues: one of a man, the other of a woman.¹⁴² The country people call the first *Sciama*, and the last *Tama*. They seem to be at least as big as the *Abul-hon*, or the sphinx over against Cairo. Near this place is a village, where is to be seen the two statues from the river Nile, so new that one would think the workman had just perfected them.

[...]

Two leagues¹⁴³ on this side of Kenne is the ancient town of Tentiris, now called Dendera, where is a wonderful temple of the ancient Egyptians, of a prodigious bigness and height. It is to be seen at two leagues distance.¹⁴⁴

Maqrizi¹⁴⁵ said that it has as many windows as there are days in the year. They are so placed that everyone answers to a degree of the zodiac, so that the sun rising in a differing degree every day of the zodiac, it sends in its beams into a distinct window

¹³⁹ Capuchin Father Protais.

¹⁴⁰ Approximately 4,83 kilometres.

¹⁴¹ Better known as Medinet Habu, where the mortuary temple of Ramesses III was built.

¹⁴² Better known as the *colossi* of Memnon.

¹⁴³ Approximately 9,7 kilometres.

¹⁴⁴ The temple of Dendera between Luxor and Abydos, dedicated to Hathor.

¹⁴⁵ Ahmed al-Maqrizi, *Description topographique et historique de l'Égypte*, p. 690.

from the day before. And when at the end of the year it has finished and run through every degree of the zodiac, it has also from the east cast in its beams into every window of this temple. For this cause it is looked upon as a wonder in Egypt.

[...]

Here ends the relation of the Father Protais. I could wish that this good man had given us a more exact account, and more at large of the rarities that he saw in these places, for this relation is superficial.

Of an enchanted watering place in Cairo

June 14th, 1673

The 14th of June, I went at Cairo to see the enchanted watering place, called in Arabic *Houd il merasset*, which is under the mosque of the palace, called *Kalet il Kesch*.¹⁴⁶ No traveller has ever spoken of it.

It is a black marble-stone, made like a watering place, seven feet long, arising out of the ground about a feet and a half.¹⁴⁷ The sides, within and without, are adorned with little hieroglyphic letters, as well as the brims. The people of Cairo say that in the time of the ancient Egyptians the sick people did recover their health by drinking water out of it and that by the virtue of a *Rassim*, or charm, which the priests of Egypt had given to it.

¹⁴⁶ The mosque of Ahmed Ibn Tulun.

¹⁴⁷ Approximately 2,1 by 0,5 metres.

Travelled places

*‘Travel and you shall find consolation for what you left behind, and work hard, for the pleasure of life lies in working hard. I saw that still water spoils; it is only sweet if it flows. And if the sun stays in the sky all the time people will be bored with it.’*¹⁴⁸
— al-Shafī —

Giza

The pyramids described by Wansleben are the famous pyramids of Giza of Pharaohs Cheops, Chephren and Mykerinos. They were built in the fourth dynasty (2527-2450 BC) and are situated against the city of Cairo. As Wansleben assumes it was indeed a Memphite necropolis, ideally placed due to the steady underground of the Middle Eocene Mokattam formation and the nearby quarries.

Even though Wansleben mentions the pyramids being not entirely square, he was clearly mistaken, because the measurements of the sides of the pyramids only differ by mere centimetres.¹⁴⁹ As for the flat surface he mentions on top of the biggest pyramid, that of Cheops, this is caused by the loss of the upper stone of the monument. No statue has ever been raised here.

The wells that are cut into the rock of the pyramids are probably the corridors that lead into the subterranean chambers of the pyramids.¹⁵⁰

Around the pyramids are indeed many tombs cut in the rock formation belonging to high ranking officials of the King. Wansleben could have entered any of them, but his descriptions are not clear enough to point out which of them exactly.

In front of the second biggest pyramid of Giza, that of Chephren, lays the Sphinx. Wansleben takes notice of a cave underground in the hinder part of the Sphinx. However, the drawing of Giza added to the Italian manuscript, shows the hinder part to still be covered by ground surface. A possibility would be that a cave or hole somewhere in the ground surface caused him to believe that this was a part of the Sphinx itself. This chamber also led him to believe that the Sphinx was a burial

¹⁴⁸ J. Starkey and O. El Daly (eds.), *Desert travellers*, p. XVI.

¹⁴⁹ R. Stadelmann, ‘Giza’, in D.B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford encyclopedia of ancient Egypt*, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 25.

¹⁵⁰ Stadelmann, ‘Giza’, p.29.

place. This, however, is not the case.

Wansleben's interpretation that the head of the Sphinx is that of a woman, is probably caused by the *nemes* head cloth¹⁵¹ the Sphinx is wearing, resembling the longer hair of a woman. The head is not hollow.

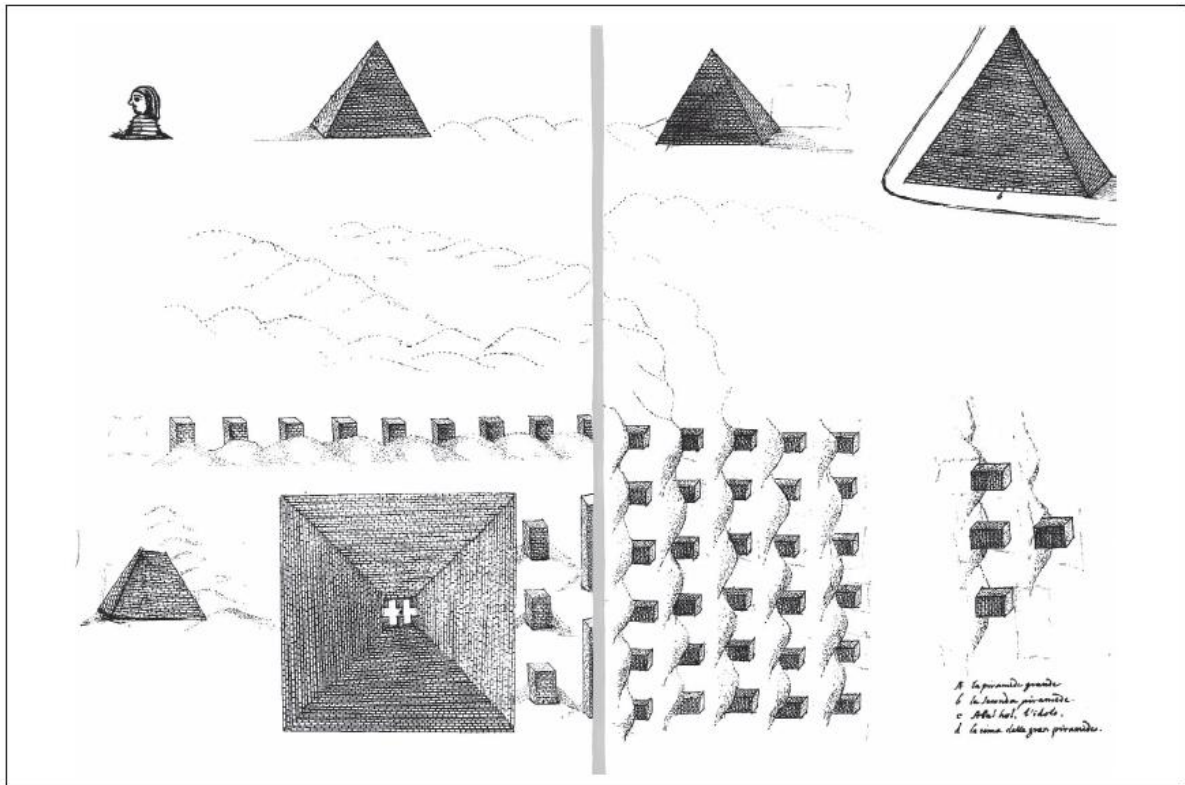


Figure 1. The drawing of Giza added to the Italian manuscript. In the left upper corner the sphinx, still with its hinder part covered by the sand. The original drawing is found on folio 104 of the manuscript. This picture was copied from M. Martin, 'Le journal de Vansleb en Égypte', *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*, 97 (1997), p. 189.

Saqqara

Saqqara is a Memphite necropolis mostly known for the step pyramid of King Djoser (third dynasty, 2687-2668 BC), but continued in use until the Christian era. It lies 40 kilometres south of Cairo.

The first thing visited in Saqqara by Wansleben is a sacred bird necropolis. There are three possible catacombs he could have entered. This can be either the

¹⁵¹ The *nemes* head cloth was only worn by pharaohs. It has stripes and is often adorned with an ureas snake and a vulture.

falcon catacomb at north Saqqara, the northern ibis catacomb or southern ibis catacomb.¹⁵² The locations of these catacombs are known to have been discovered by travellers as early as the seventeenth century. Something that is confirmed by this last passage of Wansleben's journal. However, these were probably not the entire catacombs, as some areas have been cleared from the sand only in the last part of the twentieth century.¹⁵³

The tombs that are described by Wansleben as a 'virgin well' and 'the church' could have been any tomb. All over this site are graves to be found. Unfortunately there is no way of knowing which are the ones described here.

According to Wansleben the site of Saqqara counts fifteen pyramids. However, there are only thirteen.¹⁵⁴ It is very likely that he mistook mastabas for crumbled pyramids. Wansleben specifically names three pyramids that still appear most complete. One of his companions, monsieur de Tiger, entered one which has a pavilion, making it most likely this to be the step pyramid of Djoser. Because this was also the one farthest from Saqqara village, the other two are likely to be the pyramids of Userkaf and Teti, although (nowadays) they are all but untouched by the sands of time.

Wansleben also mentions that the pyramid with the pavilion is sometimes referred to as the pyramid of Rodope. Here he is clearly confused about which pyramid this myth refers to. According to this ancient story the courtesan Rodope built the third pyramid of Giza, that of Pharaoh Mykerinos. Rodope was actually a slave who lived during the reign of Pharaoh Amasis (570-526 BC). She was born in Thrace, and was brought to the harbour city Naucratis in the north of Egypt as a slave. Later in life her freedom was bought by a rich man who had fallen in love with her. Because of her beauty and nick-name of "the rosy-cheeked", she ended up being confused with the Egyptian queen Nitocris, who was said to have built the third pyramid at Giza. In actual fact, neither of them was responsible for the building of it.¹⁵⁵

The monument which is called *Mastabet Faraoun* by Wansleben is now

¹⁵² H.S. Smith, *The sacred animal necropolis at north Saqqara. The main temple complex* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2006), p. 5.

¹⁵³ S. Davies and H.S. Smith, *The sacred animal necropolis at north Saqqara. The falcon complex and catacomb*, (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2005), p. 4.

¹⁵⁴ J. Baines and J. Malek, *Cultural atlas of ancient Egypt*, revised edition (New York: Checkmark Books, 2000), pp. 140-141.

¹⁵⁵ W. Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman biography and mythology* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1849), p. 652.

known to be the tomb of king Shepseskaf, the last king of the fourth dynasty. It was excavated by Gustave Jequier in 1924.¹⁵⁶

Alexandria

Wansleben's first visit in Alexandria is to "Pompey's Pillar". This pillar is one of the few remains of the Roman Serapeum, built during the reign of Diocletian (284-305 BC), in the southern part of the city. The name of Pompey has thus wrongly been given to the pillar. It still stands today, but no longer leaning to one side as it did in the seventeenth century.¹⁵⁷

Next he walks along the Calitz, which was the name given to the canal running around the city. The lake called Sebaca can only be the lake which nowadays bears the name Mareotis.

He and his company end up in the Gabbari necropolis of the city, in a place with many tombs dating from the mid third century BC to the sixth century AD, called Fort Saleh. It has only been properly excavated at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries when the construction of a freeway uncovered the site. The site is indeed, as Wansleben suggested, a burial place, including rows upon rows of *loculi* for individual burials.¹⁵⁸

Heliopolis

Close to the ancient site of Heliopolis lies the village El-Matarieh, now merged with the modern city of Cairo. The site had, and still has today religious value for Christians. The story goes that the Holy Family took a rest in the village during their flight into Egypt. An ancient tree in the village is referred to as the "Tree of the Virgin" and is an important place for Copts.¹⁵⁹

From this place Wansleben walks further to the ancient site of Heliopolis, which lies about 950 meters from it. In antiquity it was an important place with temples dedicated to the sun god Ra, but nowadays, as in the seventeenth century,

¹⁵⁶ V. Chauvet, 'Saqqara', in D.B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford encyclopedia of ancient Egypt*, vol. III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 176.

¹⁵⁷ Baines and Malek, *Cultural atlas*, p. 169.

¹⁵⁸ J. Mc.Kenzie, *The architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, 300 BC- 700 AD* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 2007), p. 74. J. —Y., Empereur, *Alexandria rediscovered*, (London: British Museum Press, 1998), pp. 180-181.

¹⁵⁹ S. Halikowski Smith, 'Meanings behind myths: the multiple manifestations of the Tree of the Virgin at Matarea', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 23 (2008), p. 101.

almost nothing remains. The needle, or obelisk, described in the journal is that of Sesostris I, and remains the only characteristic monument at this site.¹⁶⁰

The Faiyum

Firstly mentioned by Wansleben is the ancient site Arsinoe, better known by the Greek name Krokodilopolis or the modern name Medinet el-Faiyum. It was once the site of a twelfth dynasty temple for the crocodile god Sobek. Today, all but a few remains are left as most of the ancient town has been covered by the modern capital of the province.¹⁶¹

In Biamhu, close to Krokodilopolis, the remains of a statue that Wansleben saw can still be seen. The large pieces belong to two large quartzite statues of Amenemhat III, that once stood in front of his temple that no longer stands.¹⁶²

Next the journal speaks of a strange needle which was erected by Sesostris I in Begig, also known as Abgig or Ebgig, three kilometres southwest of Medinet el-Faiyum. Indeed, this obelisk has a strange form, deviating from the standard shape of these monuments. Its top is blunt rather than pointed as one would expect. While it clearly stood upright when Wansleben visited the site, during Napeoleon's campaign in Egypt the obelisk was reported lying down. Later on it broke in two pieces. Today, it has been repaired and can be seen in its new location in Medinet el-Faiyum.¹⁶³

From the village Sinnuris, north of Medinet el-Faiyum, Wansleben walks to lake Qarun, also known as lake Moeris. He takes note of a city on the other side of the lake and its ruins. The ancient town is known as Dimeh el-Siba, Dimeh of Lions, Dimai, or by its Greek name as Soknopaiou Nesos. It was a town founded during the Ptolemaic Period. Many remains of lion statues have been found here, because of which it is called Dimeh of Lions.¹⁶⁴

The Labyrinth Wansleben speaks of is a monument of many stories and histories. When talking of the labyrinth egyptologists usually refer to the funerary temple of Amenemhet III next to his pyramid in Hawara, as it was identified by

¹⁶⁰ Baines and Malek, *Cultural atlas*, p. 173.

¹⁶¹ Baines and Malek, *Cultural atlas*, p. 131.

¹⁶² A. Eggebrecht, 'Biahmu', in W. Helck and E. Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, vol. I (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975), pp. 782-783.

¹⁶³ A. Eggebrecht, 'Begig', in Helck and Otto (eds.), *Lexikon*, vol. I, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975), p. 680.

¹⁶⁴ M. Capasso and P. Davoli, 'Soknopaiou Nesos Project. Report on season 2012 of the archaeological mission of centro di studi papirologici of Salento University at Dime es-Seba (El-Fayum, Egypt)', *Papyrologica Lupiensa* 22 (2013), pp. 74, 81-82.

Flinders Petrie in 1912. However, the identification of the famous labyrinth on the basis of the histories of Herodotus, Manethon and Pliny causes some issues with this, as they claim to have seen it in the vicinity of lake Qarun. Moreover, their accounts only lead to more questions. The great waters described by Herodotus did not exist in this place during his time, and his description seems very unrealistic. Later authors took his words for truth and copied them, but they all attribute the labyrinth to a different king.¹⁶⁵ Pliny even mentions two labyrinths in Egypt.¹⁶⁶ Wansleben makes the story even more difficult when he confuses the labyrinth as described by Pliny with Qasr Qarun. This site, also known as Dionysias, contains Greco-Roman remains of temples, baths and a fort built under Diocletian.¹⁶⁷ The latter is probably what Wansleben thought of as a castle of a vizier named Caron. He probably derived the name “Caron” from the name of the site.

The next monument visited is the pyramid of Hawara. This pyramid was built in the twelfth dynasty for Pharaoh Amenemhet III (1853-1806 BC). Contrary to the pyramids at Giza it was built with mudbrick, causing it to have crumbled more than the Giza pyramids, especially with the moist ground upon which it was built. Wansleben finds himself constrained from seeing the pyramid up closely because of a ditch of the river Joseph (Bahr el-Yussuf). He probably met with the Bahr Abdallah Wahbi, a branch of the Bahr el-Yussuf, which has run around Hawara since the fifteenth century AD.¹⁶⁸ The other pyramid Wansleben was unable to visit is that of Illahun. Contrary to his belief, it did not belong to Joseph, but to Pharaoh Sesostris II (1897-1877 BC).¹⁶⁹

Medinet Ansina

The town Ansina visited by Wansleben is also known as Medinet Ansina, Antinoe, Antinoopolis or by the Arab name of the nearby modern village Shekh Abadah. The town lies on the eastern side of the Nile just three kilometres south of the monastery of Der Abu Hennis. The site consists of archaeological remains from many periods of Egyptian history, but almost all have been built upon by emperor Hadrian, when he

¹⁶⁵ O. Kimball Armayor, *Herodotus' autopsy of the Fayoum: Lake Moeris and the labyrinth of Egypt* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1985), pp. 1-4.

¹⁶⁶ Kimball Armayor, *Herodotus' autopsy*, p. 135.

¹⁶⁷ Baines and Malek, *Cultural atlas*, p. 131.

¹⁶⁸ I. Blom-Böer, *Die Tempelanlage Amenemhets III in Hawara. Das Labyrinth. Bestandsaufnahme und Auswertung der Architektur- und Inventarfragmente I* (Leiden: NINO, 2006), p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ R.A. Frey, 'Illahun', in D.B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. II, p. 150.

founded his city Antinoe in 130 AD, supposedly for his lover Antinoos, who later drowned in the Nile. The architectural remains described by Wansleben belong to this period of the city's history. He describes the two main roads, the triumphal arch and some pillars. Of these pillars, he attributes one to Marcus Aurelius. It indeed belong to this emperor, also known as Alexander Severus, and stands at the north-western side of the site. Together with three other pillars, it belonged to a portico.¹⁷⁰ The town has two major roads formerly aligned with columns on both sides. One road runs from behind the portico of Marcus Aurelius to the other side of the town where an amphitheatre stood. The other road starts at the triumphal arch running towards the mountains to the eastern gate. According to Wansleben a palace named the Abulkerun should be somewhere north-east of the Marcus Aurelius pillar. There are many remains along the road running towards the mountains to fit his description of a monument with pillars, although it is unclear which one he was specifically writing about.¹⁷¹

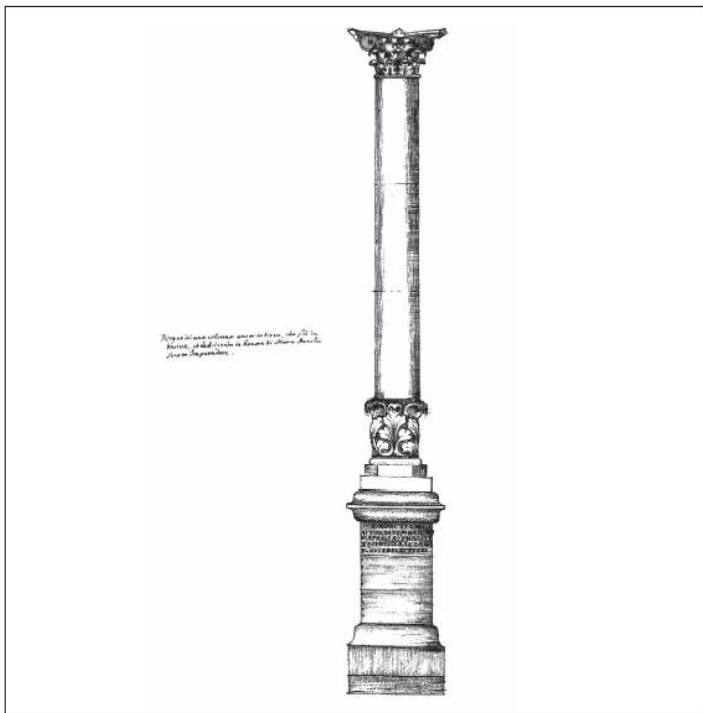


Figure 2. A drawing of the Pillar of Alexander Severus, or Marcus Aurelius, as added to the Italian manuscript. The original drawing is found on folio 123 of the manuscript. This picture is reproduced from Martin, 'Le journal de Vansleb en Égypte', p. 191.

¹⁷⁰ J. Osing, 'Antinooupolis', in Helck and Otto (eds.), *Lexikon*, vol. I (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975), pp. 323-324.

¹⁷¹ Map of Antinoe from 1823 by J. Fourier.

<http://www.historicmapworks.com/RareBookLibrary/country.php?country=Egypt#> (25-08-2014).

The Vadigamus

Finding the place called Vadigamus or Wadi Gamus by Wansleben causes some difficulties. In the area are several wadis filled with Pharaonic limestone quarries that have been reused by monks and hermits as their domiciles. The names of the wadis tend to be confused by villagers and writers or change over time. According to Gertrud van Loon, who works as a coptologist on the excavation of the Catholic University of Leuven in this area, there is a wadi now named Wadi Gamus north of Der Abu Hennis. However, on the basis of Wansleben's description she suspects that he was not talking about this wadi, but about a wadi referred to as Der Abu Hennis Wadi 3 (DAH 3) by the excavation team. This identification is based on the number of quarries in that wadi, the half's hour travelling Wansleben describes and the fact that it runs southwards. Moreover, according to Wansleben he passed the Vadigamus on his way back from the "Hieroglyphic Cave". If one would walk from that specific cave back to Der Abu Hennis, the wadi that is passed is in fact DAH 3. Unfortunately, the drawing of this area that was added to the Italian manuscript does not give much clearance because the distances are not up to scale at all and the details of the mountains are minimal.



Figure 3. A satellite view of the Der Abu Hennis area showing the quarry wadis, including the two wadis that can be taken into consideration as Wansleben's Wadi Gamus or Vadigamus.

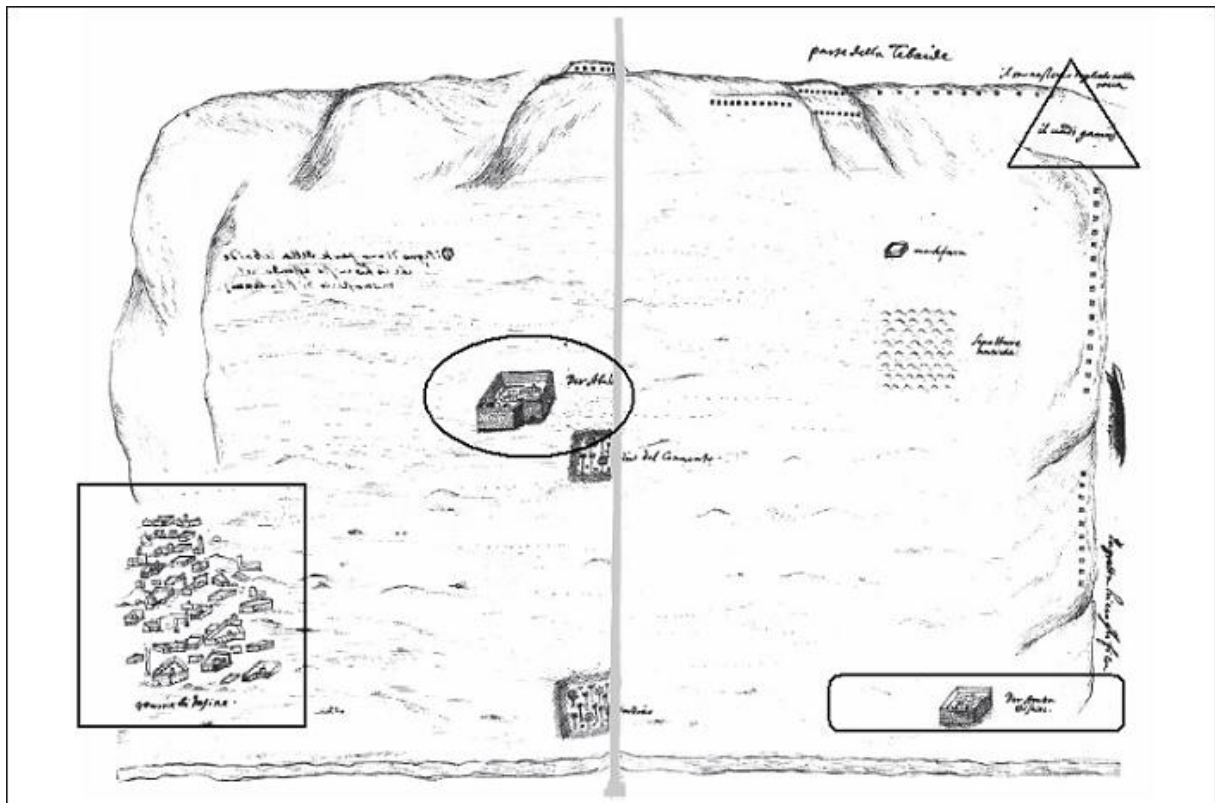


Figure 4. The drawing of the Der Abu Hennis area from the Italian manuscript. In the square the city of Antinoe, in the circle the monastery of Der Abu Hennis, in the triangle the mouth of the Wadi Gamus and in the rectangle the monastery of Amba Bishoi are depicted. The original drawing is found on folio 127 of the manuscript. This picture is reproduced from Martin, 'Le journal de Vansleb en Égypte', p. 191. The circles have been added by the author.

Der el-Bersha

On Friday the 7th of April Wansleben visited the caves that are near the monastery of Amba Bishoi, also known as the village Der el-Bersha. The caves are located in the Wadi Nakhla on the eastern bank of the Nile south of Der Abu Hennis, and consist of limestone quarries from the New Kingdom (1539-1075 BC) and tombs from the Middle Kingdom (1975-1640 BC). The cave entered by him and described as the "Hieroglyphic Cave" and "The Church" is the tomb of the nomarch, or provincial governor, Djehutihotep who lived during the twelfth dynasty (1938-1755 BC). As Wansleben writes this tomb is full of images and hieroglyphic texts, to some part still having their original colour. The red Coptic crosses that are painted upon the walls of the tomb show that this tomb was used by Christian hermits and monks as well.

Luxor

Before father Protais speaks of Luxor he mentions El-Tod and Armant. Both lie on the west bank approximately twenty kilometres south of Luxor. Both were important cult places for the god Montu, to whom their temples were dedicated.

In Luxor Protais writes about two separate towns, the old Luxor and the new Luxor. In new Luxor the monument he speaks about is usually referred to as the Luxor temple, still standing in the modern part of the city surrounded by houses and roads. It was founded in the eighteenth dynasty (1539-1075 BC) and added on by later pharaohs. Of the two obelisks in front of the entrance only one now remains. The second obelisk was given to France, and re-erected at Place de la Concorde in 1833. Next to the two obelisks Protais saw two giant statues of Amenhotep III flanking the entrance to the temple. Just like Wansleben, he thinks these are statues of women, probably due to the *nemes* head cloth. Upon their heads stands the double crown of Upper- and Lower-Egypt. Protais calls them “strange coverings with a globe on top”. In his time the temple stood only half above the sand, as is made clear by the two giant statues that are covered up to their girdles. It was only from the late nineteenth century onward that the temple began to be excavated, and cleaned from the sand and city rubble.¹⁷²

Old Luxor is today referred to as Karnak. This is, contrary to Protais’ believe, a temple complex dedicated to the gods Amun, Mut and Chonsu. Protais was probably one of the first Europeans to set his eyes upon it. In the seventeenth century the temple was completely unexcavated and, many parts were still covered by sand and all kinds of rubble. Because of this Father Protais only saw and described a part of the precinct of Amun, and nothing of those of Mut and Chonsu. He walked as far up as the fourth pylon. He did therefore see the famous hypostyle hall with columns so big “that five men can scarce embrace one of them about”. He also saw the sacred lake, or basin, in which the priests cleansed themselves before starting their daily rituals.¹⁷³

Next Protais mentions the town of Habu from where two great statues can be seen on the other side of the Nile. The place is better known as Medinet Habu, famous for the funerary temple of Ramesses III on the western bank of the Nile. From here the two colossal statues of Amenhotep III, better known as the *colossi* of Memnon, that once flanked the entrance of Amenhotep’s temple can be seen. Protais

¹⁷² W.J. Murnane, ‘Luxor’, in Redford (ed.), *Oxford encyclopedia of ancient Egypt*, vol. II, pp. 309-311.

¹⁷³ G.E. Kadish, ‘Karnak’, in Redford (ed.), *Oxford encyclopedia of ancient Egypt*, vol. II, pp. 223-224.

calls them Sciama, or Chama, and Tama, a man and a woman. The southern *colossus* Chama, and the northern one Tama.¹⁷⁴ These names seem to go a long way back up to medieval Arabic and Coptic sources, although not entirely clear where they originated. However, the names seem to refer to a locality rather than a statue.¹⁷⁵ It has been suggested that the name Chama is derived from an ancient name of the toponyme *Dꜣmt* (Djemet).¹⁷⁶ Another explanation is that the names are derived from the ancient Egyptian words for Upper- and Lower-Egypt, *Šmꜥ* (south) and *Tꜣ-Mḥy* (north).¹⁷⁷

Dendera

Between Luxor and Abydos on the west bank lies the temple of Dendera, dedicated to the goddess Hathor. Construction began under Nectenabo I (380-362 BC) and the complex was decorated in the Ptolemaic period (305-30 BC). It was further decorated until the reign of emperor Trajan (98-117 AD). Dendera was properly excavated by Flinders Petrie in 1897 and 1898.¹⁷⁸

Dendera is mainly known for the zodiac on the ceiling of the chapel dedicated to Osiris, of which the original is now located in the Louvre. However, Macrizi does not mention this zodiac, but names 180 windows through which the sun travels day by day. Such a feature does not exist at Dendera, although the sun was very important for the temple's rituals, especially for the "uniting with the sundisk ritual" when Hathor would unite with the sun upon the roof of her kiosk.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, different chapels were in use for different days of the month.¹⁸⁰

The mosque of Ahmed Ibn Tulun

The palace Kalet il Kesch Wansleben writes about is the oldest mosque in Cairo constructed for the Abyssinian caliph Ahmed Ibn Tulun. It once belonged to the site *Al-Qata'i*, from where Ahmed Ibn Tulun ruled. It was a huge centre, complete with a

¹⁷⁴ H. Gabolde, 'Tāma et Chāma. Éléments d'une enquête sur le nom des colosses de Memnon', in A. Gasse *et al.* (eds.), *Et in Aegypto et ad Aegyptum. Recueil d'études dédiées à Jean-Claude Grenier*, vol. II (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 2012), p. 283.

¹⁷⁵ Gabolde, 'Tāma et Chāma', p. 286.

¹⁷⁶ Gabolde, 'Tāma et Chāma', p. 289.

¹⁷⁷ Gabolde, 'Tāma et Chāma', p. 291.

¹⁷⁸ S. Cauville, 'Dendera', in D.B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford encyclopedia of ancient Egypt*, vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 381.

¹⁷⁹ F. Dunand and C. Zivie-Coche, *Gods and men in Egypt, 3000 BCE to 395 CE* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 226.

¹⁸⁰ Cauville, 'Dendera', p. 381.

palace, gardens, a stadium for all kinds of sports and a zoo. Tulun was sent from Baghdad in 868 AD to be a governor of Egypt, but instead founded his own dynasty independent of Bagdad. This lasted until 905 AD when *Al-Qata'i* was invaded and ruined by the Abyssinians. The only thing they left standing was the mosque. The name Kalet il Kebsch means “Citadel of the Ram”, derived from the belief that Abraham offered a ram here.¹⁸¹

Today there is no watering stone with hieroglyphs inside or under this mosque, but a later traveller might help to make sense of what Wansleben describes. The German traveller Carsten Niebuhr (1733-1815) describes how he copied the hieroglyphs on a Ptolemaic sarcophagus in front of the Ibn Tulun Mosque that was used as a watering trough.¹⁸² This fits Wansleben’s description and may well have been what he saw.

Maps

In the two figures below all the places discussed in this chapter are pointed in a map. The first map shows the places Wansleben himself visited, which are indicated by a black dot and those that were described by Fathers Protais and d’Orléans that are indicated by a square. The second, more detailed map shows the sites in the Faiyum.

¹⁸¹ R. Woltering and J. Kelder, *Architectuur in Egypte* (Amsterdam: Bulaaq, 2007), p. 122.

¹⁸² H. R. Guichard Jr, *Niebuhr in Egypt: European science in a Biblical world* (London: Lutterworth Press, 2014), p. 109.

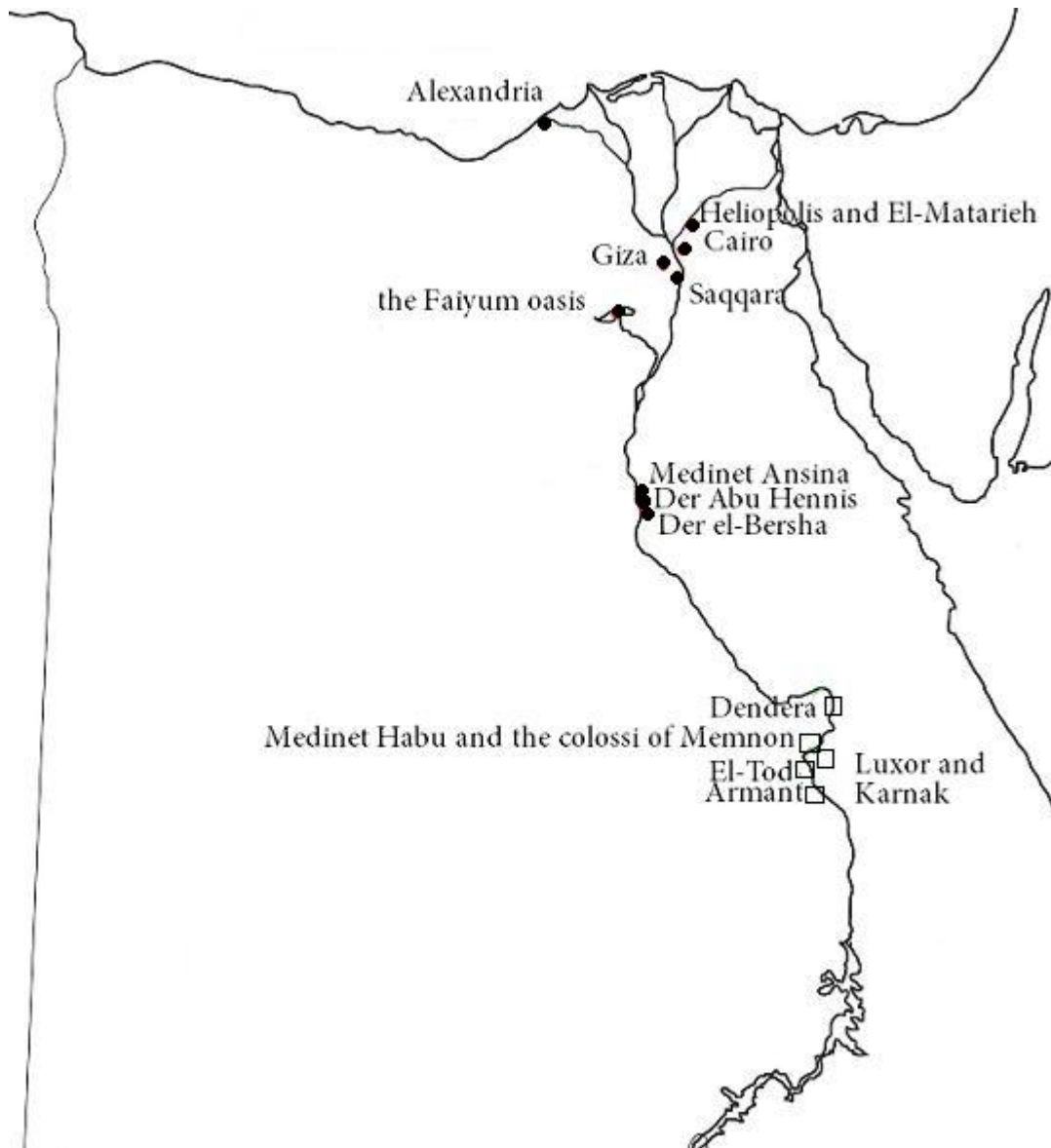


Figure. 5. Map of Egypt showing all the pharaonic sites that were visited by Wansleben, or by Fathers Protais and d'Orléans.

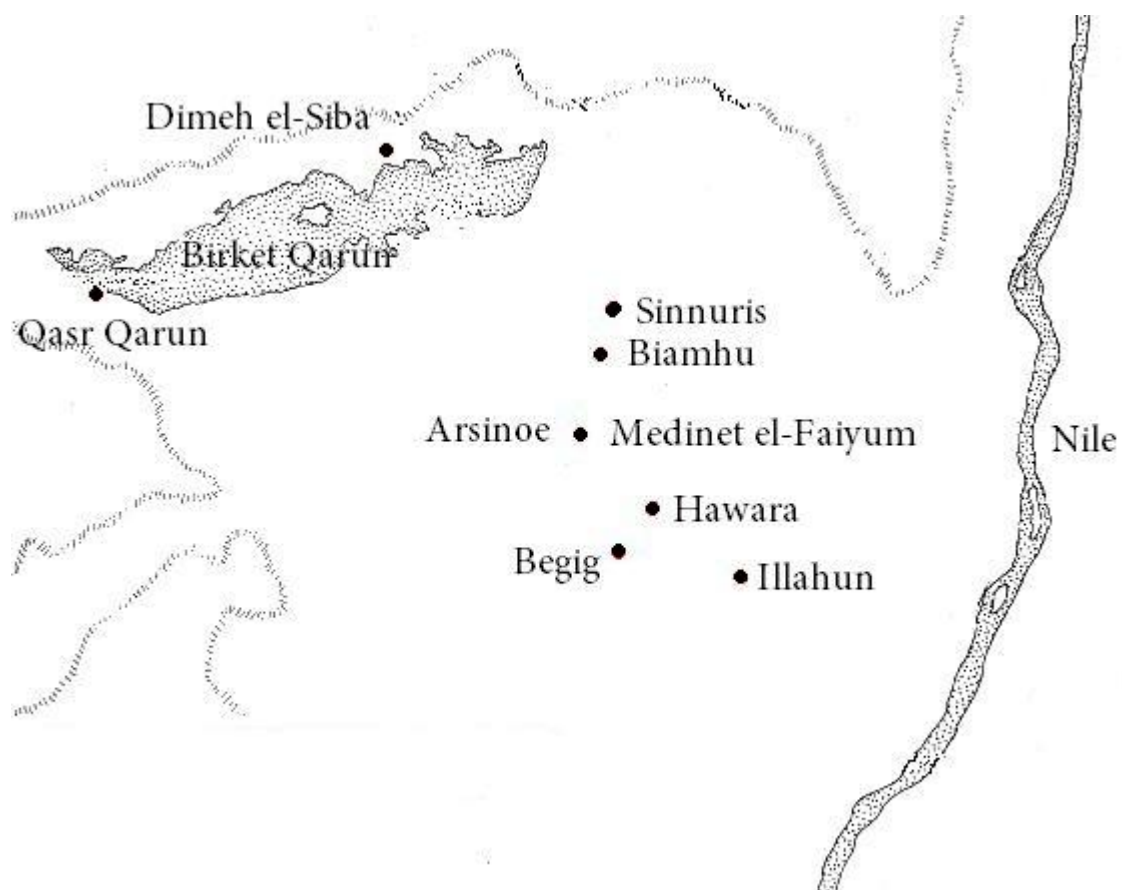


Figure 6. Map showing the places visited by Wansleben in the Faiyum oasis.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Jacques van der Vliet, Robert Demarée and Gertrud van Loon for providing egyptological guidance. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris is thanked for sending me copies of Johann Michael Wansleben's original handwriting in BNF Ms. Italien 435.

Bibliography

Primary sources

al-Maqrizi, A., *Mawaiz wa al-'Itibar bi dhikr al-khitat wa al-'athar* (Būlāq: Dār al-Ṭibā'ah al-Miṣrīyah, 1270).

Bouriant, U., *Description topographique et historique de l'Égypte*, (Paris: Leroux, 1895-1900).

Ibn Patrik, S., *Ketāb al-tārīk al-majmū' 'alā'l-taḥqīq wa'l-taṣdīq or Nazm al-jawhar* §1-8, 1 r^o-4 v^o in M. Brendy (ed), *Das Annalenwerk des Euthychios von Alexandrien, Scriptorum Arabici*, vols. 44 and 45 (Leuven: Peeters, 1985).

Paulus, H.E.G. (ed.), *Sammlung der merkwürdigsten Reisen in den Orient, in Uebersetzungen und Auszügen mit ausgewählten Kupfern und Charten, auch mit den nöthigen Einleitungen, Anmerkungen und collectiven Registern*, vol. IV (Jena: Christ. Heinr. Cuno's Erben, 1794).

Plinius Secundus, Gaius, *Natural History* (77-79 AD) in J. Bostok, *Pliny the Elder. The natural history*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Plin.+Nat.+toc>.

Protais, P. and C.-F., d'Orléans, 'Relation du voyage du Sayd, ou de le Thebayde, fait en 1668 par le PP. Protais & Charles-François d'Orleans, Capucins missionaries', in M. Thévenot, *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, vol. V (Paris: André Cramoisy, 1663), pp. 1-4.

Thevenot, J. de, *Relation d'un voyage fait au Levant* (Paris: L. Billaine, 1665).

Wansleben, J.M., *Nouvelle relation, en forme de Journal, d'un voyage fait en Égypte en 1672 et 1673* (Paris: Etienne Michallet, 1677).

Wansleben, J.M., *The present state of Egypt; Or, a new relation of a late voyage into that kingdom* (London: Robert Everingham, 1678).

Wansleben, J.M., *Relazione dei viaggi, di Michele Vanslebio, intrapresi per l'acquisto di Codd. d'ordine di Luigi XIV. Una raccolta di lettere del medesimo*

relative agli acquisti di Codd. orientali per la biblioteca del Re, è nel Cod. latino 17173 fra i documenti “ De variis bibliothecis ”, BNF Ms. Italien 435 (1671-1675).

Secondary sources

Baines, J., and J. Malek, *Cultural atlas of ancient Egypt*, revised edition (New York: Checkmark Books, 2000).

Baker, J.R., *Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

Blom-Böer, I., *Die Tempelanlage Amenemhets III in Hawara. Das labyrinth. Bestandsaufnahme und Auswertung der Architektur- und Inventarfragmente I* (Leiden: NINO, 2006).

Capasso, M., and P. Davoli, ‘Soknopaiou Nesos Project. Report on season 2012 of the archaeological mission of centro di studi papirologici of Salento University at Dime es-Seba (El-Fayum, Egypt)’, *Papyrologica lupiensa*, 22 (2013), pp. 71-84.

Cauville, S., ‘Dendera’, in D.B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford encyclopedia of ancient Egypt*, vol.I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 381-382.

Chauvet, V., ‘Saqqara’, in D.B. Redford (ed.), *Oxford encyclopedia of ancient Egypt*, vol. III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 176-179.

Davies, S., and H.S. Smith, *The sacred animal necropolis at north Saqqara. The falcon complex and catacomb* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2005).

Delahaye, G.R. , ‘Les Coptes vu par le voyageur J.-M. Vansleb au XVII^e siècle’, in A.A. Maravelia (ed.), *En Quête de la Lumière: Mélanges in Honorem Ashraf A. Sadek*, BAR International Series (Oxford: Archeopress, 2006), pp. 145-154.

Delahaye, G.R., ‘Johann Micheal Vansleb, voyageur en Égypte au XVII^e siècle, face au surnaturel’, in N. Bosson and A. Boud’hors (eds.), *Actes du huitième Congrès International d’Études Coptes*, vol. I (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2007), pp. 69-78.

Dunand, F., and C. Zivie-Coche, *Gods and men in Egypt, 3000 BCE to 395 CE* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004).

Eggebrecht, A., ‘Begig’, in W.Helck and E. Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, vol. I (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975), p. 680.

Eggebrecht, A., 'Biahmu', in W. Helck and E. Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, vol. I (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975), pp. 782-783.

Empereur, J.-Y., *Alexandria rediscovered* (London: British Museum Press, 1998).

Fagan, B.M., *The rape of the Nile. Tomb robbers, tourists, and archaeologists in Egypt* (London: MacDonald and Jones, 1977).

Foster, C., 'The zoology of Herodotus and his Greek descendants', in J. Starkey and O. El Daly (eds.), *Desert travelers from Herodotus to T.E. Lawrence* (Durham: ASTENE, 2000), pp. 1-20.

Frey, R.A., 'Illahun', in D.B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 150-151.

Gabolde, H., 'Tāma et Chāma. Éléments d'une enquête sur le nom des colosses de Memnon', in A. Gasse et al. (eds.), *Et in Ægypto et ad Ægyptum. Recueil d'études dédiées à Jean-Claude Grenier*, vol. II (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 2012), pp. 283-294.

Guichard Jr, H.R., *Niebuhr in Egypt: European science in a Biblical world* (London: Lutterworth Press, 2014).

Halikowski Smith, S., 'Meanings behind myths: the multiple manifestations of the Tree of the Virgin at Matarea', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 23 (2008), pp. 101-128.

Hamilton, A., *The Copts and the west 1439-1822. The European discovery of the Egyptian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Holt, P.M., 'The pattern of Egyptian political history from 1517 to 1798', in P.M. Holt (ed.), *Political and social change in modern Egypt. Historical Studies from the Ottoman conquest to the United Arab republic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 79-90.

Kadish, G.E., 'Karnak', in D.B. Redford (ed.), *Oxford encyclopedia of ancient Egypt*, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 222-226.

Keimer, L., 'Quelques détails oubliés ou inconnus sur la vie et les publications de certains voyageurs Européens venus en Égypte pendant les derniers siècles', *Bulletin de l'Institute d'Égypte*, 31 (1949), pp. 121-175.

Kimball Armayor, O., *Herodotus' autopsy of the Fayoum: Lake Moeris and the labyrinth of Egypt* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben Publisher, 1985).

Mansel, P., *Constantinople: city of the world's desire* (London: Murray, 1995).

Martin, M., 'Le journal de Vansleb en Égypte', *Bulletin de l'Institute Française d'Archéologie Orientale*, 97 (1997), pp.181-191.

Mc. Kenzie, J., *The architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, 300 BC- 600 AD* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 2007).

Murnane, W.J., 'Luxor', in D.B. Redford (ed.), *Oxford encyclopedia of ancient Egypt*, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 309-312.

Omont, H., *Missions archéologiques françaises en orient aux XVII et XVIII siècles*, 2 vols. (Paris: Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, 1902).

Osing, J., 'Antinooupolis', in W.Helck and E. Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, vol. I (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975), pp.323-325.

Plomer, H.R., *et.al.*, *A dictionary of the printers and booksellers who were at work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1668 to 1725* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922).

Schwartz, J., and H. Wild, *Qasr-Qārūn/Dionysias 1948* (Cairo: IFAO, 1950).

Shaw, S.J., *The financial and administrative organization and development of Ottoman Egypt, 1517-1798* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962).

Smith, W., *Dictionary of Greek and Roman biography and mythology* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1849).

Smith, H.S., *The sacred animal necropolis at north Saqqara. The main temple complex* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2006).

Stadelmann, R., 'Giza', in D.B. Redford (ed.), *Oxford encyclopedia of ancient Egypt*, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 25-30.

Starkey, J., and O. El Daly (eds.), *Desert travellers from Herodotus to T.E. Lawrence* (Durham: ASTENE, 2000).

Winter, M., *Egypt society under Ottoman rule: 1517-1798* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

Woltering, R., and J. Kelder, *Architectuur in Egypte* (Amsterdam: Bulaaq, 2007).

Digital sources

Bostok, J., *Pliny the Elder. The natural history:*

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D36%3Achapter%3D17>

Griffith, S.H., 'Euty chius of Alexandria', *Encyclopaedia Iranica:*

<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/euty chius>.

Mancala:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mancala>

Map of Antinoe from 1823 by J. Fourier:

<http://www.historicmapworks.com/RareBookLibrary/country.php?country=Egypt#>.

Appendix

This appendix contains all the drawings that accompany the original Italian manuscript BNF Ms. Italien 435. They are reproduced from Martin, 'Le journal de Vansleb en Égypte', pp.186-191. This appendix also contains the title page and folios 1, 2, 3 and 4 from BNF Ms. Italien 435.

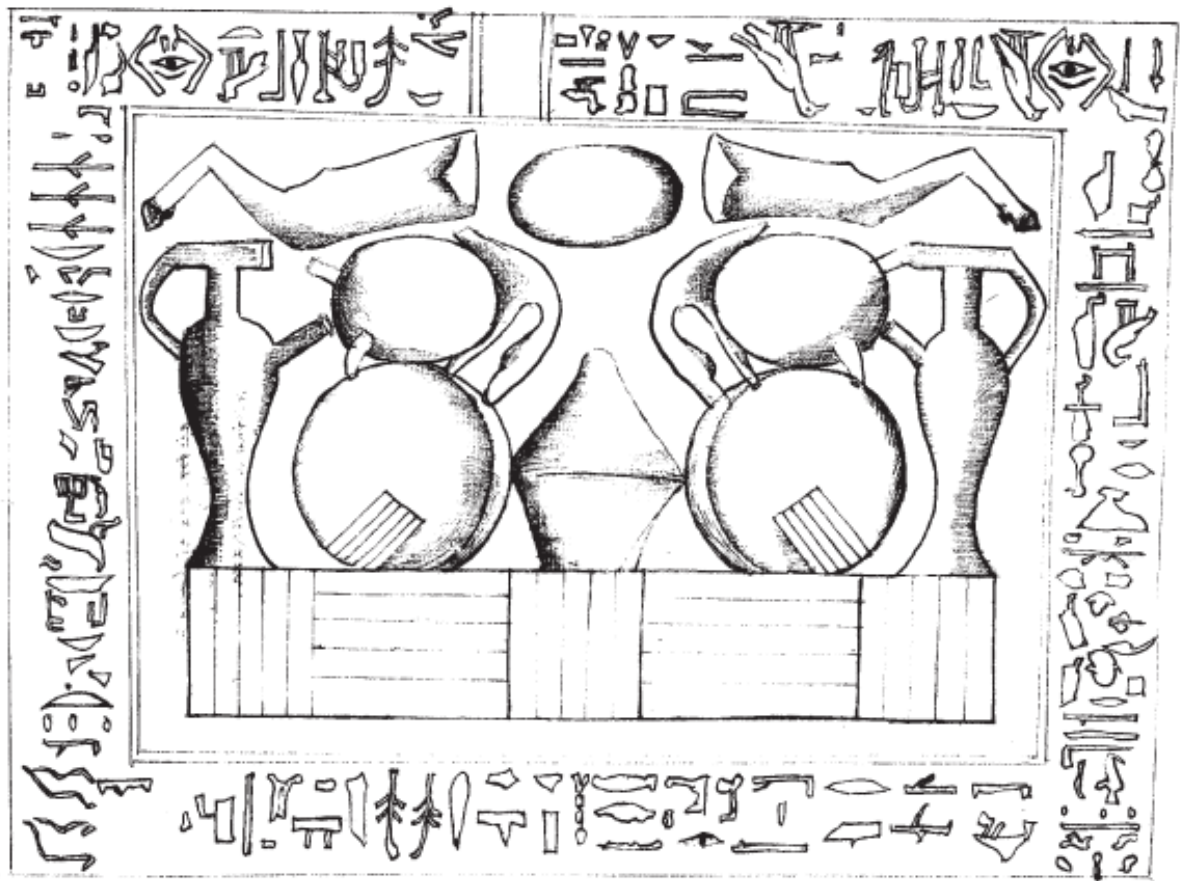


Figure 7. An offering table from Saqqara, folio 39.

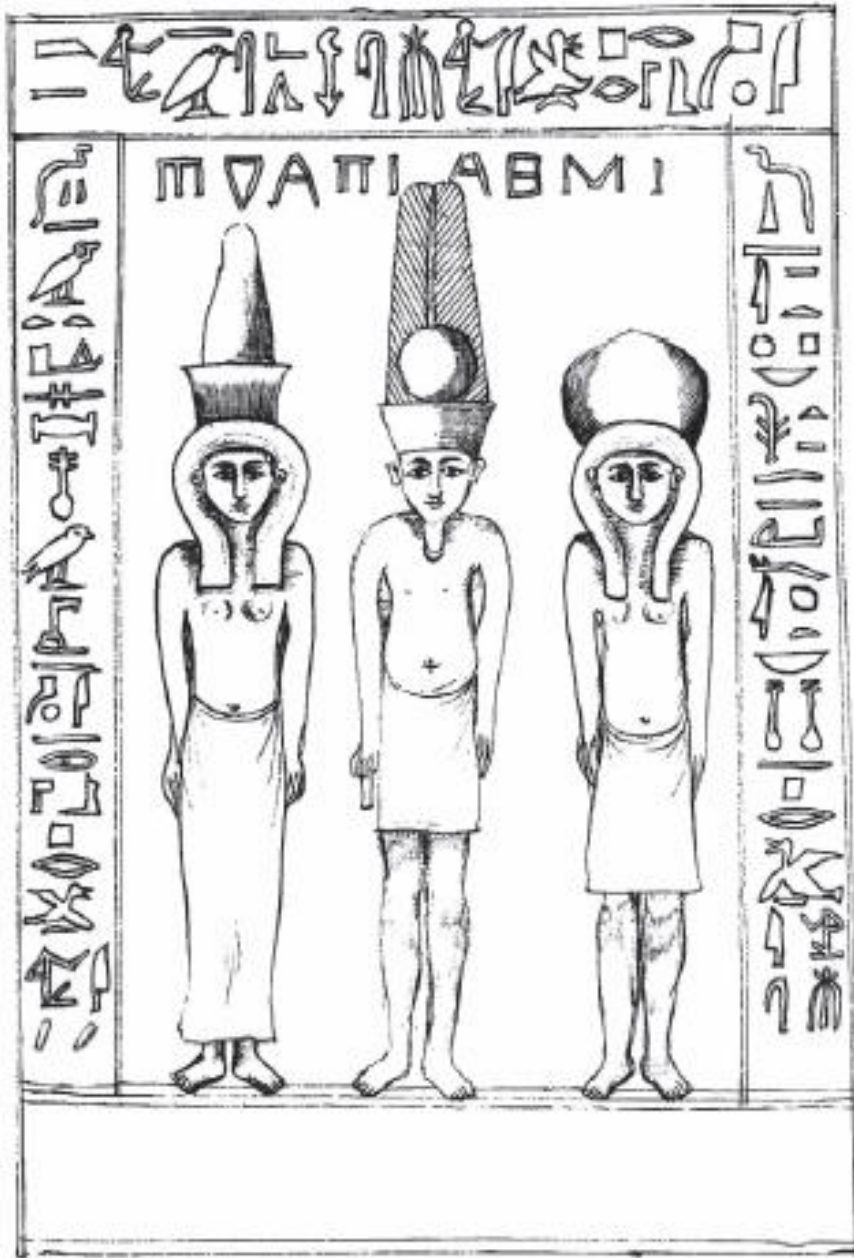


Figure 8. A stela from Saqqara, folio 40.

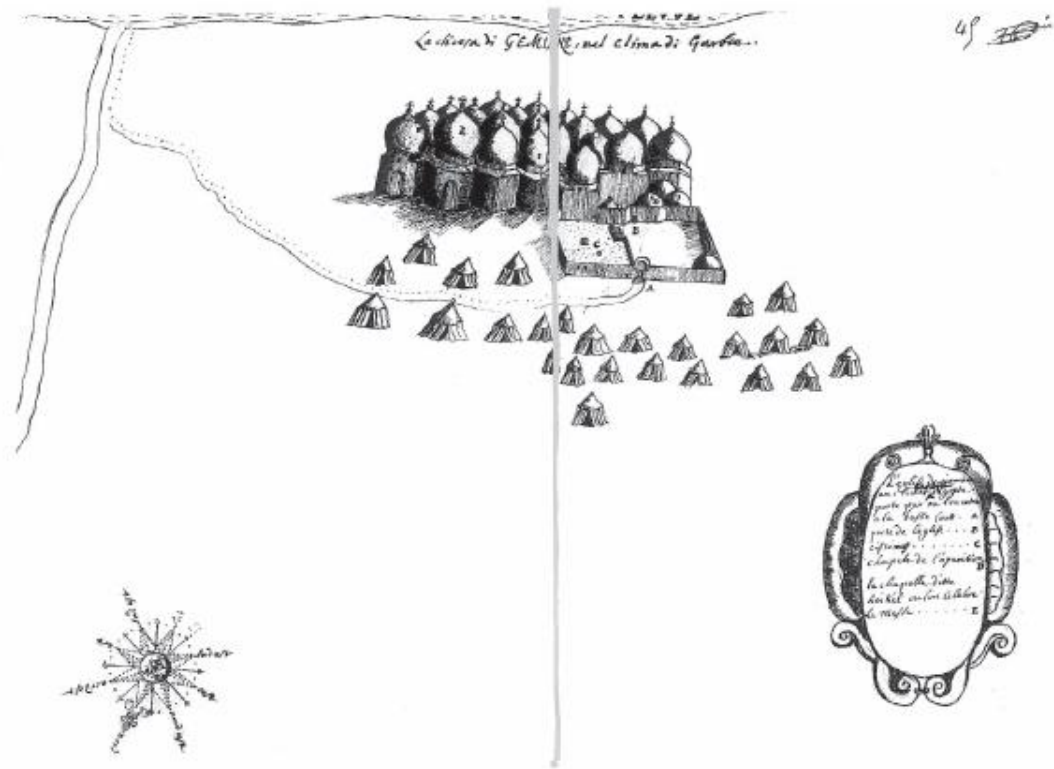


Figure 9. Sitt Damyana, folio 45.

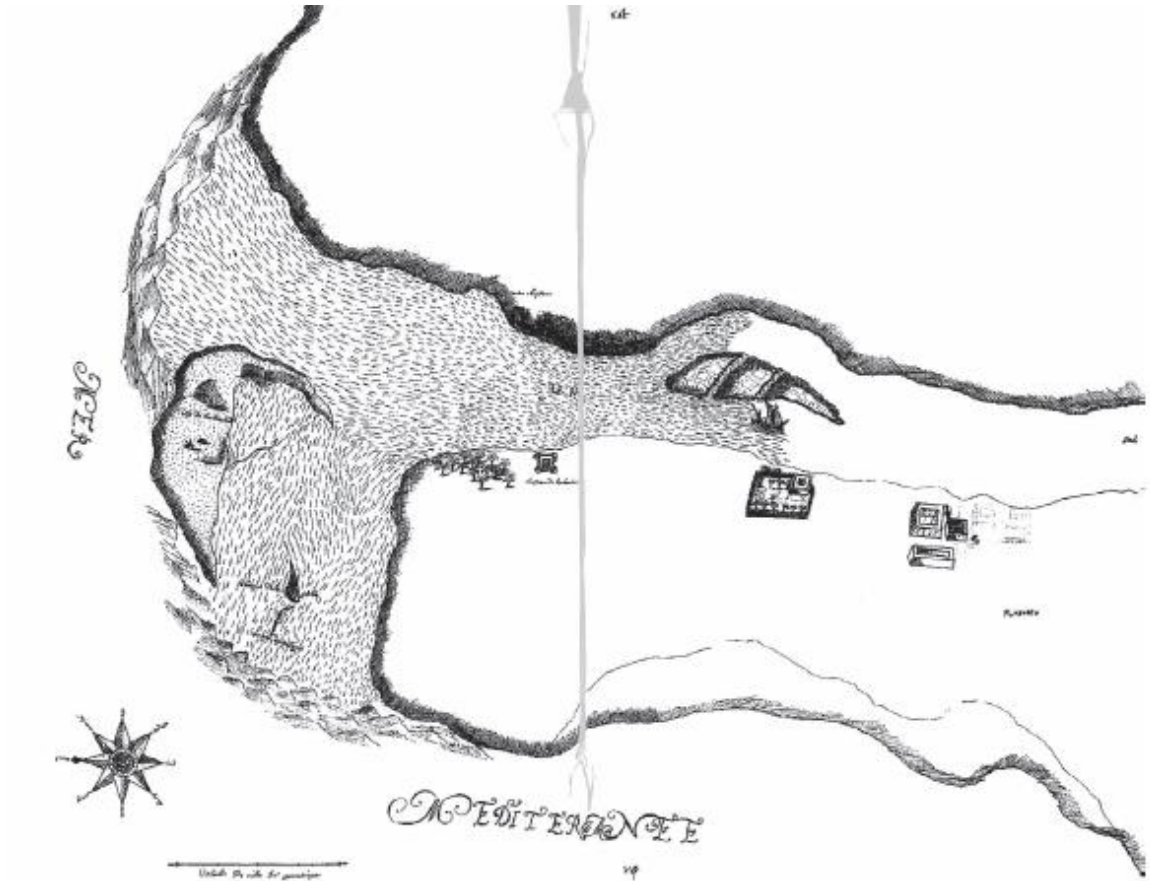


Figure 10. The Nile at Rosetta, folio 50.

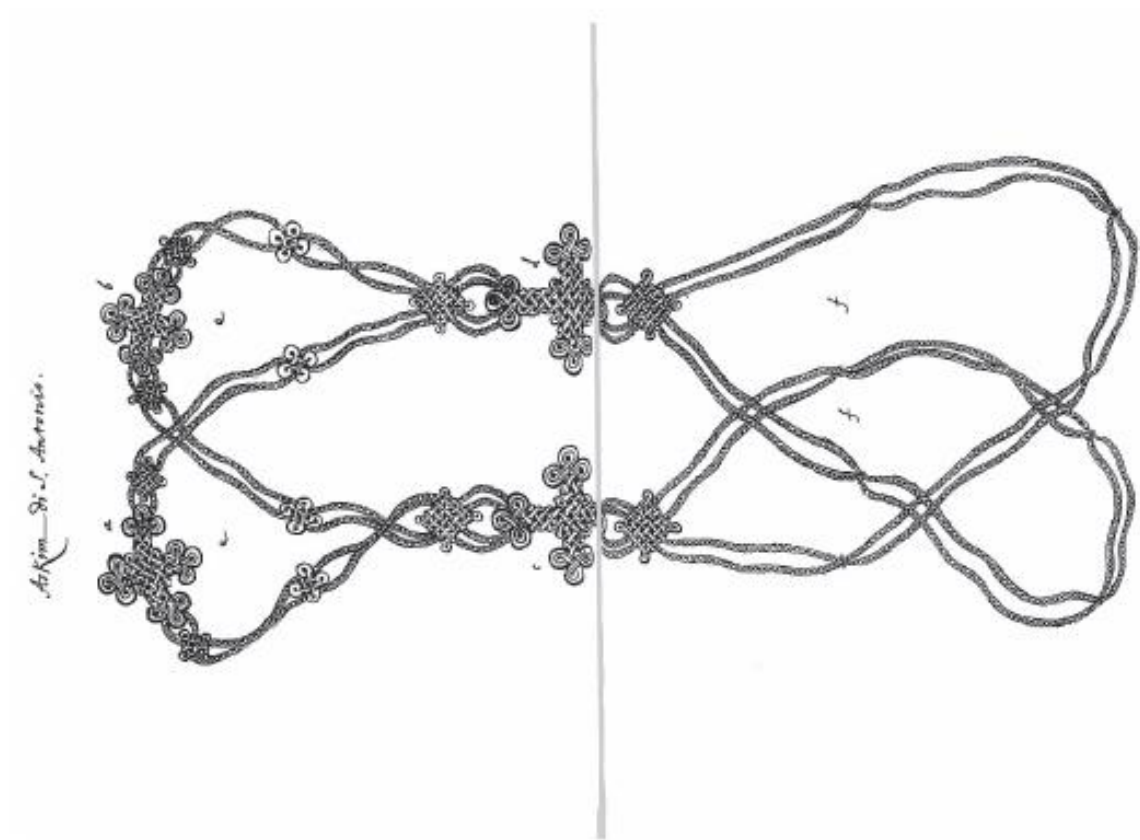


Figure 11. A Coptic necklace, folio 81.

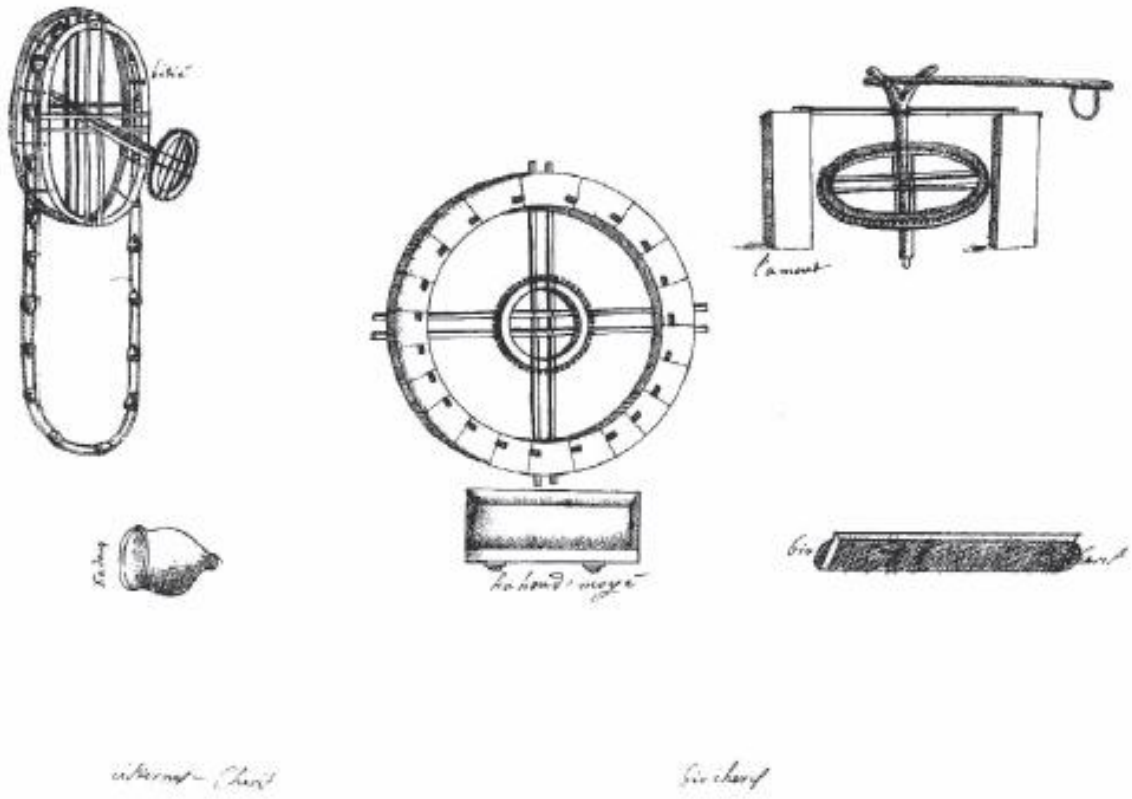


Figure 12. A Saqqiya, folio 91.

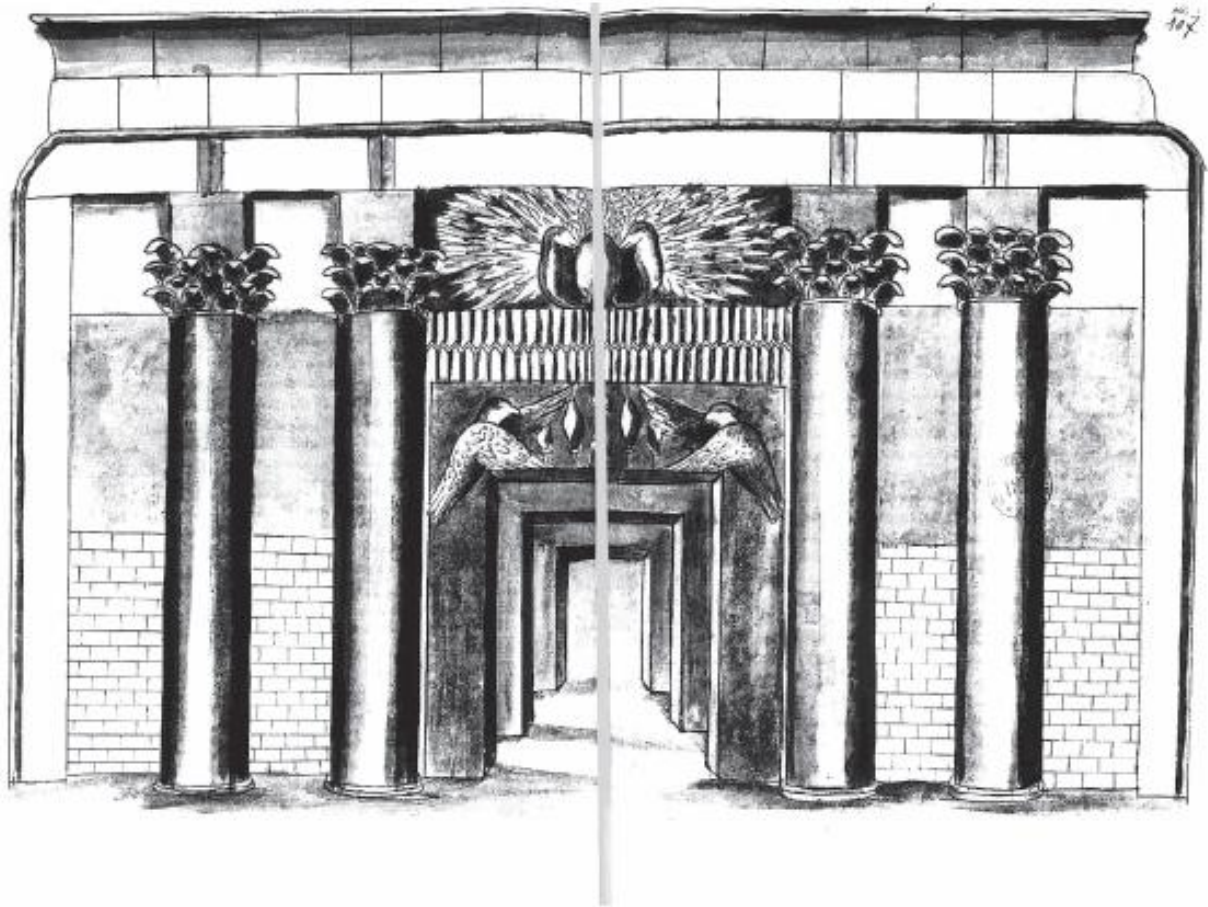


Figure 13. The temple of Esna, folio 107.

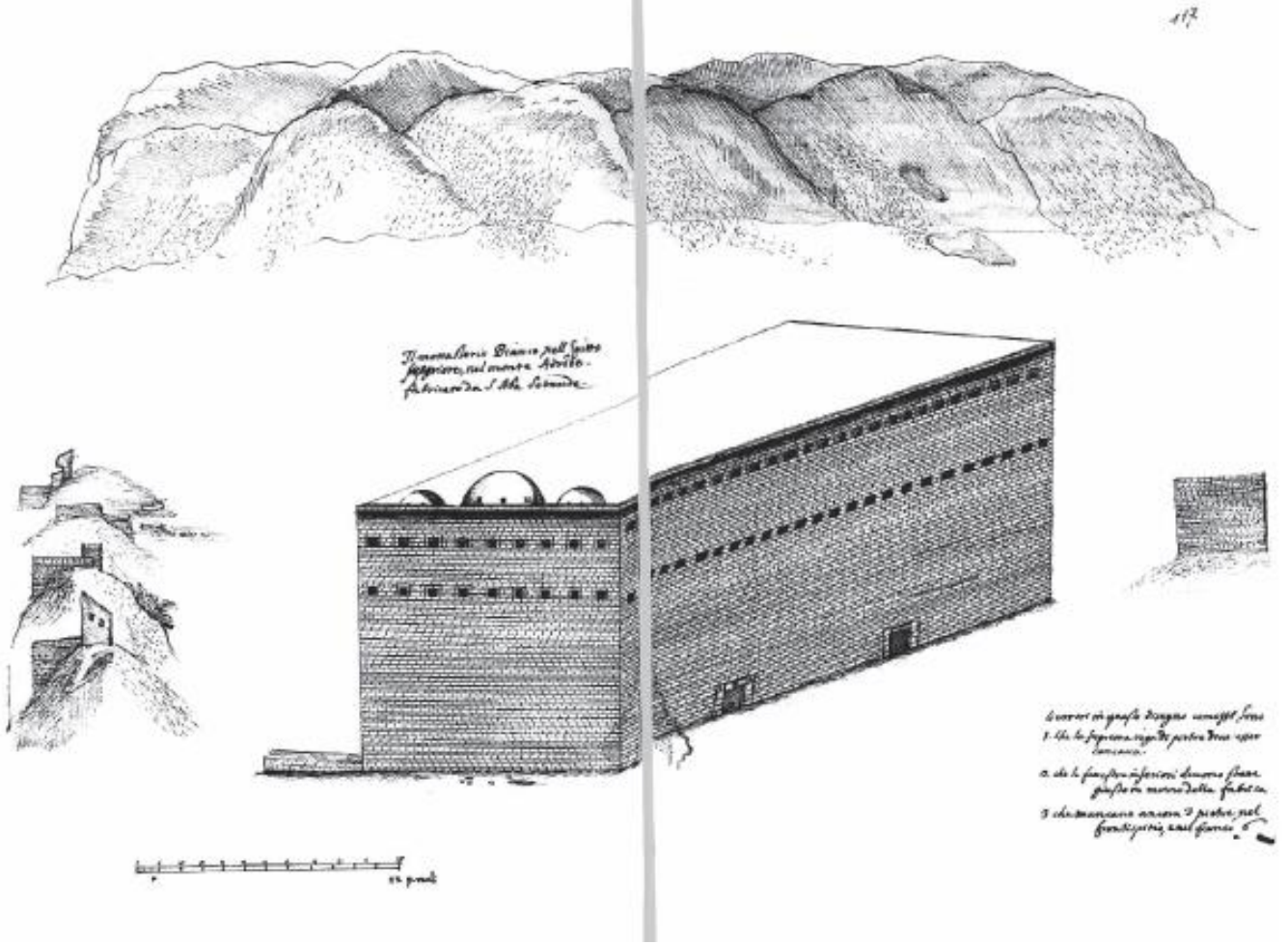


Figure 14. The White Monastery at Sohag, folio 117.

un'inscrizione che fu trovata in una grotta della
Tebaida, tagliata in Pietra.

ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ ΣΟΡ ΩΗΘΩΝ ΕΜΑΝΟΥΑ ΖΑΜΗΝ.

(εὐαγγ. Ματθ. 23 οὐρανῶν.)



ΑΠΑΔΡΑΣΜ
ΑΝΑΠΡΑΥΣΟ
ΤΟ ΕΝ ΚΩ ΘΩ
ΜΕ ΣΟΡ ΗΙΣ ΣΙΝΔΙΚ

ΑΠΑΔΡΑΣΜ
ΑΝΑΠΡΑΥΣΟ
ΤΟ ΕΝ ΚΩ ΘΩ
ΜΕ ΣΟΡ ΗΙΣ ΣΙΝΔΙΚ

ΑΠΑΔΡΑΣΜ
ΑΝΑΠΡΑΥΣΟ
ΤΟ ΕΝ ΚΩ ΘΩ
ΜΕ ΣΟΡ ΗΙΣ ΣΙΝΔΙΚ

ΑΠΑΔΡΑΣΜ
ΑΝΑΠΡΑΥΣΟ
ΤΟ ΕΝ ΚΩ ΘΩ
ΜΕ ΣΟΡ ΗΙΣ ΣΙΝΔΙΚ

Figure 15. A Greek-Coptic stela, folio 120.

2.
Reg. 10263.

Biblioth. 211.

I I

Parte prima del giornale aggiustato, e corretto,
Di Gio: Michele Vansleb, di Erfordia, ~~aggegrato~~
nel quale egli racconta le sue osservazioni le più curiose, che
egli ha fatto sopra li luoghi, e paesi, per dove egli è pas-
sato e li avvenimenti li più memorabili, che
gli sono annunziati nel suo viaggio in Le-
uante, fatto per ordine di S. M^{te} Chr^{ma}.

LUDOVICO XIV Re di Francia, e Navarra.

e da Costantinopoli
mandato a Monsig^r. COLBERT

suo segretario, e ministro di Stato.

L'anno 1675 1675.



mandato per M^o Maggi Melafino, etc. 11 di X^{to} 1675.

Figure 16. BNF Ms. Italien 435, title page.

124 di Ottobre 1675. a crocefione al mare negro.

B
7
1.
A. 1671

Dopo che hauerua piacere a Monsig.^o de Colbert, segretario, e mini. pro. d' An-
to di S. M.^o Ch.^o LUDOVICO XIV. Re di francia, e di Nauarra, (che sia sem-
pre felice,) di ordinarmi un viaggio in Levante, à nome di detta Maestà,
per raccogliere manuscritti rari, e uechii in ogni sorte di lingue orientali;
come anche medaglie curiose, per l'arricchimento della Biblioteca di S. M.^o e
per ciò detto Monsig.^o fattomi dare da M.^o Carcau, Bibliotecario Regio le
infrattanti, e memorie ueyane, tanto per la ^{copione} notizia dell'uno, che dell'altro
sorte ~~che era stato ordinato che se ne facesse un viaggio verso Aleppo, e da
da Parigi per Marsilia, alla fine del meze di Aprile, del 1675, e vi
arriuai alli 8 di Maggio.~~

In Marsilia presi il mio alloggiamento al Lion d'oro, da M.^o la Perugie, con
lettaro, habitante del porto, attendendo la tua commodità del imbarco, per
una delle scale in Levante. E bonche si trouauano di uerse commodità pronte, e
per Alessandria, e per Alessandretta, e per Scida; niensedimeno mi portò il
genio di pigliare più tosto imbarco per Alessandretta, che per Alessandria,
per causa che la peste allora era molto furiosa in tutto l'Egitto.

Alli 20 di Maggio, Giovedì mi imbarcai per la sudetta scala, sopra il uascello
del uechisio Capt. Estau, chiamato li tre Re che era un Vascello grande, e
che caminaua benissimo; dopo hauer prima fatto l'accordo con il capitano
di pagarli trenta reali di Spagna, tanto per la mia reditura, quanto per il
passaggio fino in Alessandretta. E con noi s'imbarcavano anche per Mal-
ta, cinque caualieri, fra li quali era nominat am.^o uno, chiamato M.^o
de fons - Guineur, della Prouincia di Poitou, uicino à Nantes, in Bretagna,
caualiere di gran spirito, e con il quale contrattai una molto stretta ami-
cizia. Poi mi era anche un giovane Lionese, che faceua professione di mer-
cante, chiamato Jean Filibeir, il quale andaua in Aleppo, per entrare
in luogo dell'affaiato defunto, del suo fratello.

Alli 29 d' arriuammo à Malta, e uici trattennuamo cinque giorni. In
quel mentre feci cognoscenza con il caualiere de Trandorf, nobile di Sas-
sonia, e conservatore della nazione Alemana: ancora mi feci cogno-
scenza con il P. fran.^o Rigori, della Compag.^o di Gesu, persona ugualmen-
te illustre, e per la sua rara eruditione: come anche per li suoi due viaggi
fatti in Persia. Egli mi fece l'honore di mostrarmi una sua opera molto
curiosa, e dotta, intitulata la Persia antica, e moderna, la quale allora non
era ancora stampata. et alli 3 di Giugno ci partimmo da Malta, per pro-
seguire il nostro viaggio verso Alessandretta.

Figure 17. BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 1.

2.
A. 1671.
Maggio.
Giugno

Alli 8 di Giugno ci fu dato la caccia da 6 vascelli corsari Barbareschi, vicini alle isole Gozie, che sono situate alla banda meridionale di Candia, vicino alla medesima Isola. ma Dio ci mando un bon vento, che li scappammo.

Alli 12 di Giugno ci diedero ancora la caccia due Vascelli corsari Ligorresi, alla vista di Bafos in Cipro perseguitandoci con tiri di cannone alla batte, et abbordandoci anche alla sera. ma quando io gli mostrai la mia patente di S. M^{te} Christi^{ma} e loro seppero che io era inviato da S. M^{te} in Levante, per i suoi affari; dopochè aver fatto da noi un poco di collatione, si partirono senza molestarci.

Alli 13 di^{mo} arrivammo a Larnica, villaggio grande, situato alla banda meridionale di Cipro, ove è la scala delli mercanti franchi. M^o Sauvant Vice-Consolo per la natione francese, mi fece l'honore di ricevermi in casa sua.

E perchè il nostro Capitano brattò in di fare una compra, o di seta era, o di cotone, non mi ricordo bene, e conseguentem^{te} hancua di bisogno di trattare, andò in quella scala per alcuni giorni; ripulsi in questo mentre di fare un viaggio a Nicosia, metropoli di dett^a Isola, per vedere un poco quella antichità, e l'altre città. A quest' effetto mi diede M^o Sauvant uno delli suoi servitori, il quale sapena egualm^{te} bene la lingua Greca, et Italiana, per servirmi di Turcomanno, e per farmi cognoscenza in detta città. E per non esser io sicuro, che al mio ritorno haurai trovato il nostro Vascello ancora a Larnica, pagai in tanto al capitano ilnolo intero, cauando le mie robe dal vascello, e mi partii per Nicosia alli 16 di Giugno, della quale vedequita adesso una superficiale descriptione.

Della città di NICOSIA

Nicosia è la metropoli di Cipro, e dista da Larnica, un cammino di otto hore à cavallo solam^{te}. e si come essa era nel tempo antico la residenza delli Re di Cipro; così è alla ancor hoggidi la residenza del Paga, governatore di tutta l'Isola; benchè nel tempo che io vi era, vi fusse solam^{te} un Mutesellim o sia presidente.

Essa è situata in una pianura, in un territorio fertile, et abbondante di alberi fruttiferi. e di mediore grandezza. ed alli residui delli palazzi, e chiese antiche, hora fatte moschee, si può cognoscere, che essa era anticamente una città nobilissima. ma dopo che è pervenuta in potere de' Turchi, (ed che nel presente anno del 1675. sono 105 anni;) ella ha perso il suo antico splendore quasi intieram^{te} rovinando li Turchi li palazzi antichi delli Signi e nobili Venetiani à posta, per una mera brutalità, e costume barbaro, senz' altra ragione, e fabbricando poi sopra li residui delle mura glie, e fondamenti, piccole, e basse capanne di terra. In essa habitano Turchi, e Greci, e delli Giudei non ne mancano ancora, però non fanno un numero considerabile.

La città ha ancora le sue fortificationi antiche, cioè conforme li Signi Venetiani l'hanno fortificata, con baloardi, foderati tutto di pietre di taglia,

Figure 18. BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 2.

9 § Nicosia 1672
con il lor fosso, e contra scarpa. ma li baluardi, oltre che sono molto bassi, sono anche
dalla banda che i uen da l'orient, dominati da una picola elevatione di terra la
quale gli ha pregondanti di molto, in tempo dell' affedio di Sultan . . . Hauen-
do li turchi piantato la sopra la loro artiglieria, e di la battuta la citta.

Tutta l'artiglieria che è sopra li bastioni, è ancora dal tempo della signoria del-
li Venetiani, con l'arme di S. Marco sopra; ma resa affatto inutile al seruitio;
hauendo io nessun canone uisto, che non fusse Anto o inchiodato, o che haueste
hauuto una palla forzata dentro; oltre che ne anche nessuno era ben montato.

Le porte della citta sono guardate da due, e tra gli altri Solam^{te} li quali pu-
re danno gran molestia a quelli che ui entrano, et escono; efigendo da loro
non so che usanza, pero poca cosa. ^{la qual usanza} Onde ~~disendo~~ ^{disendo} ~~la~~ anche dal mio seruitore
quella loro usanza, e non uolendo lui dargliela, per esser seruitore del Console
franceze; li giurati non troppi amici di tanti ragionamenti; lo gettaro-
no abosso dalla sua mula, e lo trattarono molto male, senza che io hauesti po-
tuto soccorrerli in alcuna maniera.

Io non sono mai stato in un luogo, oue hauesse uisto piu cornacubie, corni, pi-
chi, falconi, uoltori, ciuette, piggioni, palombi, et tortorelle, ne piu famiglia-
ri ne fia fa i diuosi, come in questa citta. ui erano questi ucelli in si fatta
quantita, nelli giardini, et intorno le case, e faceuano un strepito si eccessiuo,
che ne restai tutto stordito; e mi parse d'esser in un luogo de' dannati; talche
non ui trouai riposo, ne di giorno, ne di notte. E questo uenne non solo
dalla gran quantita delli dattelieri, et altri alberi, piantate per le case, e
negli giardini, le quali li dauano commodita di annidarui li; ma anche
perche nessuno ardisce a dargli la caccia.

Vi è ancora il palazzo delli passati Re di Cipro, detti Lusignani, e serue huy-
gi di per la residenza delli Re. ma considerandolo io di fuora uia, et en-
trando anche qualche poco dentro, mi parse brutto, e lo trouai anche molto
rouinato. Non molto lontano di la, hanno li padri di terra tanta un hospiti-
talo commato, et in un altro quartiere della citta, hanno una piccola casa, e
chiesola li padri dell' osservanza.

Io stetti in Nicosia cinque giorni, in casa di un Droghista Greco, oue median-
te la paga di una piastra per giorno, fui molto honoratam^{te} trattato; ma
mi senti una febre efimera. Io andai anche a riuolere l' Arcue scio del-
l' Isola (il quale ordinariam^{te} ha la sua residenza in Nicosia, ma staua al-
lor in un conueno due hore lontano dalla citta) per uedere la sua libra-
ria, nella quale in particolare trouai un uolume Greco, in foglio, scritto so-
pra carta pecora, che conteneua una collectione di tutti li Concilii. ma egli
non lo uolte alienare da se, per causa che era uattuf, o sia legato della sua
chiesa. Ben è uero, che mi dieda poi una lettera circolare, indirizata agli
superiori di tutti li monasterii dell' Isola, nelli quali mi disse trouarsi una
gran quantita di MS. Greci uecchii, accioche potessi liberam^{te} andarui,

Figure 19. BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 3.

1678
Giugno
Lernica

^{mad}
e compranti. ma sentendomi io di già disposto, dalla maligna aria del paese, non mi fu possibile di andarmene a uertino.
Alli 21 di Giugno verso il tarde, mi partii da Nicosia, per ritornarmene a Lernica, et a due hore dappo scorsa notte, arrivai di ritorno alla casa di M^o Saucant.

Descrizione di Lernica.

Lernica (conforme di sopra ho detto) è la scala delli mercanti franchi; e delli loro Consoli, essendovi uno per la natione francese, uno per li Venetiani et uno per li Inglesi. M^o Saucant Vice-consolo per la natione francese, è un homo di statura alta, di pelo rosso, ma allegro, generoso, di bona conversazione, et amico del fornitiere, li quali egli solo tiene in casa sua, e fatti mille cortesie, senza alcun riguardo all'interesse: come fra li altri ancor io posso vantarmi, di haver ricevuto da lui mille cortesie, e mille boni officii; benchè li suoi maleuoli in comparatione di lui lo diffino qualche poco di ingratitudine, il che però alla fede del presente racconto nulla pregiudica.

Lernica in se stessa non è altro che un gran uillaggio, senza muraglie, di case basse, fatte di terra, e legni, lontana dalla marina una mezza hora di strada in circa; per il che li seruono li mercanti ordinarij delle mule, per andarsene alla marina, (oue è la Doana, con alcune habitazioni delli Turchi) e per riuenire a alle loro case. Vi è l'estate, come anche per tutti li altri luoghi, situati alla banda meridionale dell'Isola, un'aria pessima, non mancandovi in quella stagione quasi mai, o febbri maligni, o la peste medesima, che porta uia gran quantita di gente; per causa, che essendo il terreno basso, e non hauendo l'acqua alcuna prudenza per poter correr, effo è paludoso, e consequentem^{te} rinde l'aria mal sana. L'acqua a uera è poco meglio, non ritrouandouisi altra che un sol pozzo di acqua dolce, il quale sta fuori del uillaggio, in campagna aperta, di ouela portano sopra gli omeri alle loro cose.

Al contrario poi, per esser la campagna delitiosissima, e fertillissima insieme, tutte le sorti de uiveri ui sono a li bon mercato, et vi si gran abbondanza, che la si puol uiver quasi per niente. la caccia anche delli lepri, francolini, pernici, quaglie, beccacci, e quando è il tempo delli beccafichi, è copiosissima insieme, e gustosissima.

In quanto al gouerno civile di questo luogo, ui è un Cadi, o sia giudice; il gouerno Ecclesiastico in quanto alli Greci, è amministrato dal Vescouo del luogo; e li franchi hanno padri Capucini, e Zoccolanti; li quali hanno le loro habitazioni commode, con le loro chiesuole, oue amministrano li santi sacramenti senza alcun di disturbo.

Fuori di questo uillaggio vi è una antica chiesa delli Greci, di pietre di taglia, nella quale loro mostrano un fosso (che io ho uisto) e dicono che in esso sia stato sepolto, ma di poi di là robato il corpo di S. Lazarus, frasetto di Maria Magdarena, e che per questo monumento (se però mi ricordo bene)

Figure 20. BNF Ms. Italien 435, folio 4.

