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NOTES ON TERENUTHIS-TARRÂNA

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BY

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To-day, Tarrâna is a small and insignificant town in the western part of the Nile Delta. Except for a few Egyptologists, who are interested in the ruins of Kôm Abû Billo, the former town of Terenuthis and its large necropolis, few Westerners had occasion to visit the town since the construction of the Cairo-Alexandria desert-road in 1936. Whereas, at one time, Terenuthis-Tarrâna was the site of a famous Ptolemaic Temple, an important episcopal see, a strategic commercial centre and a busy monastic dependency, to-day, the town has lost its religious prestige and economic importance.

The town of Tarrâna is situated on the western edge of the agricultural land of the Nile Delta in the Province of Beḥaira and the Marqas of Kôm Hamâdah, seven kilometers north of al-Khaṭâṭba and four kilometers south of Kafr Dâwûd. On the east, the town borders at the Rosetta Branch of the Nile, on the west, it lies on the Raṭyâḥ al-Beḥaira. The main western agricultural road from Cairo (Muhammad 'Alî Barrages) to Damanhûr passes west of Tarrâna. The town, therefore, is easily accessible either from Cairo or Alexandria. In addition, train and bus services connect the town with Cairo.

I. THE PRE-CHRISTIAN TOWN AND THE NECROPOLIS OF KÔM ABÛ BILLO.

There is archaeological evidence, that the site was inhabited during the XIXth Dynasty, for « older than any other object found is a block, probably of limestone, showing cartouches of Ramses II »⁽¹⁾. Moreover,

⁽¹⁾ GRIFFITH, F. Ll., *The Antiquities of Tell el Yahûdiyeh and Miscellaneous Work in Lower Egypt during the Years 1887-1888*. London, 1890, p. 60. PORTER, B. and MOSS, R.L.B., *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Bulletin*, t. XXXIX.

two other stones with a cartouche of Necho II⁽¹⁾, and with a dedication to the Hermopolitan Toth seem to substantiate the habitation of the site during the XXVIIIth Dynasty⁽²⁾.

During the Ptolemaic period, Terenuthis gained in importance, largely on account of the Temple of Hathor, which was begun by Ptolemy I Soter and completed by Ptolemy II Philadelphus⁽³⁾. «The enclosure of this temple with its chambers and the wall of the foundation are still partly traceable, but not a single block of stone remains»⁽⁴⁾. In Ptolemaic days, the site was known as *mafket*, and the goddess was called «Hathor of Mafket»⁽⁵⁾, although Griffith suggests that the town may also have been called *μενελαου*, after Menelaus, the brother of Ptolemy I Soter⁽⁶⁾. The name Terenuti or Terenuthis has its origin in Renenutet or Ermuthis⁽⁷⁾, the serpent-goddess and beautiful «Mistress of Provisions», who was also associated with Isis, and whose blessing extended to a good inundation of the Nile and the rejoicings which followed such a rise⁽⁸⁾.

Reliefs, and Paintings, IV, Oxford, 1934, p. 67. PETERSEN, H., «The Earliest Christian Inscriptions in Egypt», *Classical Philology*, LIX, 3, 1964, p. 154.

⁽¹⁾ GRIFFITH, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61. PETERSEN, *loc. cit.*

⁽²⁾ GRIFFITH, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁽³⁾ GRIFFITH, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-64. A XIXth century description of the ruined site of Kôm Abû Billo is contained in a letter written by F. Ll. Griffith to Amalia B. Edwards in February 1880, and published in *The Academy: A Weekly Review of Literature, Science and Art*. London, New Series, XXXIII, No. 826, March 3, 1888, p. 158.

⁽⁴⁾ BOTHMER, B.V., «Ptolemaic Reliefs II: Temple Decorations of Ptolemy I Soter», *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, L, 1952, pp. 51-52.

⁽⁵⁾ BOTHMER, *loc. cit.*

⁽⁶⁾ GRIFFITH, *op. cit.*, p. 64. «At least Strabo places a city of that name in this neighbourhood».

⁽⁷⁾ LEBOVITCH, J., «Gods of Agriculture and Welfare in Ancient Egypt», *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XII, 2, 1953, pp. 73-113. HERMANN, Alfred, «Die Delta-stadt Terenuthis und ihre Göttin», *Mitt. d. deutsch. Inst. f. ägypt. Altertumskunde Kairo*, V, 1934, pp. 169-172.

⁽⁸⁾ Sacrifices were offered to Renenutet on November 1 and August 1, and, accordingly, this month was known as the «Feast of Renenutet» (Pharmouti). HELCK, W. and OTTO, E., *Kleines Wörterbuch der Ägyptologie*. Wiesbaden, 1956, p. 304.

Furthermore, the importance of Terenuthis in Ptolemaic days is also attested by the fact that the Rosetta Branch of the Nile used to be known as the Terenuthian Nile⁽¹⁾. However, neither the temple nor even the ruins of the temple dedicated to the serpent-goddess have been so far discovered.

During the Graeco-Roman Period, Terenuthis gained in economic significance and importance largely on account of the increased traffic between Alexandria, the former fishing-village of Rakote, and the Nile Valley. In addition, the town profited from the salt and soda, which was mined in the Nitrian Desert, the Wâdi 'n-Naṭrûn, and which was subsequently transported via Terenuthis to the north or to the south⁽²⁾. The ruins of this period, which are situated on the west bank of the Raṭyâh al-Beḥaira, known as Kôm Abû Billo, have repeatedly attracted archaeologists. The only building, which towers above the extensive ruins is the sepulchral chapel, standing high on the northern part of the site⁽³⁾.

In 1887-1888, F. Ll. Griffith discovered the Hathor Temple of Ptolemy I Soter⁽⁴⁾, M. C. C. Edgar published several Greek inscriptions from Terenuthis⁽⁵⁾, and M. H. Gauthier, who studied some funerary stelae from Kôm Abû Billo, remarked of the need for a large-scale

⁽¹⁾ PTOLEMAIOS, C., *Geographica*. IV, cap. 17. (Ed. C. Müller, Paris, 1901). TOUSSOUN, O., *Mémoires présentés à l'Institut d'Égypte*. Cairo, 1925. Vol. VIII, p. 192.

⁽²⁾ A papyrus of 346 A.D. shows that at that time, Terenuthis was an important port for the transshipment of soda which was mined in the Wâdi 'n-Naṭrûn. WILCKEN, *Chrestomathie*. Pap. 332. London, II, p. 231. KEES, H., « Terenuthis », *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. Zweite Reihe, IX. Halbband, 1934, pp. 718-719. SMITH, William, *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*. London, 1873. Vol. II, p. 1129.

⁽³⁾ CLARKE, S. and ENGELBACH, R., *Ancient Egyptian Masonry*. London, 1930, pp. 76 and 187. BADAWY, Alexander, « A Sepulchral Chapel of Graeco-Roman Times at Kom Abu Billo », *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XVI, 1, 1957, pp. 52-54. The measurements of the chapel are 6.75×4.59 m.

⁽⁴⁾ GRIFFITH, *loc. cit.*

⁽⁵⁾ EDGAR, M.C.C., « Greek Inscriptions from the Delta », *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*, XI, 1911, p. 2. « Some Greek Inscriptions », *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*, XV, 1915, pp. 105-112.

exploration of the site ⁽¹⁾. Hermann Junker, visiting Kôm Abû Billo in February 1928, investigated the site carefully and was deeply impressed by the vast expanse of the ruins. He intimated that a systematic excavation would certainly reveal interesting discoveries of the Graeco-Roman period ⁽²⁾. From February to April 1935, the University of Michigan excavated at various parts of the necropolis, especially near the southern edge of Kôm Abû Billo, where many funerary stelae were still found *in situ*. More than two hundred stelae were discovered, of which 194 were given to the University of Michigan ⁽³⁾, while others found their way either to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo ⁽⁴⁾, or to some other museums. Thus, for example, there is one stele in the Brooklyn Museum, ⁽⁵⁾ another stele in Copenhagen ⁽⁶⁾, and a further one in the Ikonenmuseum of Recklinghausen, Germany ⁽⁷⁾.

II. THE EPISCOPAL SEE OF TERENCE.

In his article «The earliest Christian Inscriptions of Egypt», Hans Petersen has convincingly demonstrated that the part of the necropolis of Terenuthis, which was excavated by the University of Michigan, included both pre-Christian and Christian stelae. The coins, which were discovered, date the burials to the first half of the fourth century A. D.

⁽¹⁾ GAUTHIER, M.H., «Stèles funéraires de Kom Abou Bellou», *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*, XXI, 1921, pp. 203-210.

⁽²⁾ JUNKER, Hermann, «Bericht über die nach dem Westdelta entsendete Expedition», *Denkschrift der Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Wien, LXVIII, 1928, 3, pp. 42-43.

⁽³⁾ HOOPER, F.A., *Funerary Stelae from Kom Abou Billou*. Ann Arbor, 1961.

⁽⁴⁾ ALY, ZAKI, «Some Funerary Stelae from Kom Abou Billou», *Bull. Soc. Royale d'Archéologie d'Alexandrie*, XXXVIII, 1949, pp. 55-88. «More Funerary Stelae from Kom Abou Bellou», *Bull. Soc. archéologique d'Alexandrie*, XL, 1953, pp. 101-150.

⁽⁵⁾ COONEY, J.D., *Late Egyptian and Coptic Art*. Brooklyn, 1943, p. 17.

⁽⁶⁾ KLAUSNER, Th., «Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der christlichen Kunst, II», *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, II, 1959, p. 129.

⁽⁷⁾ WESSEL, K., *Koptische Kunst. Die Spätantike in Ägypten*. Recklinghausen, 1963, pp. 95-98.

and more specifically to the reigns of Constantine I and Constantine II ⁽¹⁾. Moreover, by comparing the *orantes* on the early Christian monuments of Rome with those of the stelae of Kôm Abû Billo, Petersen has pointed out some very definite similarities. « It is more than likely that the *orantes* of the Roman catacombs are related to those of Kom Abu Billo » ⁽²⁾. This means, that we have archaeological evidence that by the first half of the fourth century, Christianity had penetrated into the Nile Delta. It is understandable that so strategically situated a town as Terenuthis would have accepted the New Faith more readily than some of the more remote and isolated villages and towns. The *Coptic Synaxarium* commemorates on the 27th of Abîb a certain Abamûn, a native of Terenuthis, who, desiring the crown of martyrdom, went before Arianus the Governor, and made his profession of faith. He was tortured and finally executed ⁽³⁾. This incident confirms that by the latter part of the IIIrd century, some of the residents of Terenuthis were Christians. This fact is also attested by the *Acts of the Martyrs*, in which we read of Apatir, the son of Basileides, who, together with his sister Eirene, fled from Alexandria and went to Terenuthis, where they crossed the river to proceed to Babylon ⁽⁴⁾. Apparently, Terenuthis was a safe place for Christians to flee to. Certainly, during the following centuries, the town gained a reputation as a haven for Christian refugees.

By the fourth century, the ancient commercial relations between the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn and Terenuthis were enriched by the traffic between the Desert Fathers of Scetis ⁽⁵⁾ and the Nile Delta. For that matter, the

⁽¹⁾ PETERSEN, *loc. cit.*

⁽²⁾ PETERSEN, *op. cit.*, p. 166. The fact that the early Christian monuments of Rome show the *orantes* in frontal view rather than in profile, and that the frontal view is also found among the *orantes* of Kom Abu Billo, has led Petersen to conclude that the Christian art of Rome influenced some of the funerary stelae of Kom Abu Billo. Cf. BONNER, Campbell, « The Ship of the Soul on a Group of Grave-Stelae from Terenuthis », *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, LXXXV, 1, 1941, pp. 84-91.

⁽³⁾ BASSET, R., « Le Synaxaire Arabe Jacobite », *Patr. Orient.* XVII, pp. 692-693.

⁽⁴⁾ HYVERNAT, H., *Les Actes des Martyrs de l'Égypte*. Paris, 1886, pp. 91 and 99.

⁽⁵⁾ EVELYN WHITE, H.G., *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn*. New York, 1932. Vol. II, pp. 141 ff.

foundation of St. Macarius was situated only 55 km. from Terenuthis, which was the nearest point in the Delta. In the *Paradise of the Fathers*, Palladius records that on one occasion St. Macarius the Egyptian went from Scetis to Therenuthum, and at eventide he came upon a certain place where there were some old bones and bodies of the dead, where he rested ⁽¹⁾. Tempted by the devils which dwelt there, St. Macarius overcame them all, so that they fled away ashamed ⁽²⁾. As a commercial centre, Terenuthis also became the market-town for the monks of the Desert of Scetis, and the *Apophthegmata Patrum* relate that St. Macarius used to go there to sell the palmleaf-baskets, which he had made ⁽³⁾.

During the vth century, the monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn were sacked by the Mazices, who advanced from the southerly oases of Farâfra and Bahriyeh, and many of the monks escaped from the desert to Terenuthis ⁽⁴⁾, among whom were the famous monks Poemen and Anub with their brothers ⁽⁵⁾. No doubt, Terenuthis provided a welcome place of protection, especially, since already in the latter part of the ivth century, the town had advanced to an episcopal see. Among the seven Egyptian bishops, who revolted against the violence of Theophilus, the 23rd Patriarch of Alexandria (384-412 A. D.), there is listed Ιωάννης Τερνούθεος ⁽⁶⁾, and the Paschal Epistle of Theophilus of the year 404 A. D. mentions « in Terenuthide Arsinthium » ⁽⁷⁾. When in 431 A. D. two hundred bishops assembled for the IIIrd Oecumenical Council of Ephesus, the episcopal see of Terenuthis was represented by its bishop Eulogios ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Probably a reference to the necropolis of Kôm Abû Billo.

⁽²⁾ BUDGE, E.A.W., *The Paradise or Garden of the Holy Fathers*. London, 1907, Vol. II, p. 197.

⁽³⁾ *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Macarius Aegyptius, XIII.

⁽⁴⁾ BUTLER, Dom Cuthbert, *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, Cambridge, 1904. Vol. II, p. 189.

⁽⁵⁾ *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Anub, I.

⁽⁶⁾ De vita et exilio Ioannis Chrysostomi, MIGNE, P.G. XLVII, col. LIX, LXI. MUNIER, H., *Recueil des Listes Episcopales de l'Eglise Copte*. Cairo, 1943, p. 11. ERMONI, V., « Les Evêchés de l'Egypte Chrétienne », *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, Paris, V, 1900, p. 640.

⁽⁷⁾ *Dict. d'hist. et géogr. ecclés.* IV, col. 762. MUNIER, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁽⁸⁾ MANSI, *Acta conciliorum*, IV, 1124. MUNIER, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

Unfortunately, there are hardly any architectural remains of the Byzantine Terenuthis. However, speaking about the Ptolemaic Temple at Kôm Abû Billo, B. V. Bothmer remarks, that «several feet above the foundation of this wall is a tile pavement with small marble columns lying upon it. It is evident that we have here the site of successive churches, and the earliest of them was built of stone taken direct from the pagan temple, and built without any reworking . . . It is evident that the town grew very rapidly in height in the Coptic period»⁽¹⁾. Whether this church was the ancient cathedral or merely one of the numerous churches of Terenuthis, is, of course, impossible to determine.

The geographical proximity to the desert monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn led the inhabitants to serve the monks. Thus, for example, we hear of a temporary *xenodochion*, which a certain Pâisia established by transforming her house, which probably was situated at Terenuthis. Here, the monks were received and lodged when they came up from the desert⁽²⁾. Was this perhaps the first monastic dependency at Terenuthis?

In the vith century, we hear of a further reference to Terenuthis as an established market-place for the products of the Desert Fathers. Abba Daniel, the famous ascete of Scetis and *hegoumenos* of the Monastery of St. Macarius⁽³⁾, used to labour with his hands, and carried the baskets and mats made by him to Terenuthis for sale, and John Moschus (550-619 A. D.)⁽⁴⁾, who visited Terenuthis, relates that here Abba Daniel was besought by a young man to pray that his wife might bear him a child. When a son was born to the couple, ill-natured persons alleged that Daniel was the real father⁽⁵⁾. On account of its proximity to the desert, Terenuthis continued to serve as a place of refuge for the periodically persecuted and oppressed Desert Fathers. Thus, at the time of the fifth sack of the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn monasteries, between 570 and 573 A. D.,

⁽¹⁾ BOTHMER, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

⁽²⁾ EVELYN-WHITE, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

⁽³⁾ CLUGNET, L., *Vie et récits de l'Abbé Daniel le Scitiote*. Paris, 1901, p. 32, II, pp. 22 f.

⁽⁴⁾ JOHN MOSCHUS, *Pratum spirituale*. MIGNE, P.G. CXIV.

⁽⁵⁾ Abba Daniel is commemorated in the Coptic Church on the 8th of Bashons (May 16).

which resulted in the complete destruction of the churches and monasteries of Scetis, the monks were scattered and several of them, among whom was Theodore of Alexandria, fled to Terenuthis ⁽¹⁾.

III. TERENCE-TERENUTHIS DURING THE ISLAMIC ERA.

At the time of the Arab Conquest, Terenuthis had considerably increased in strategic importance, which led the Romans to defend the town against the cavalry of the Arab forces of 'Amr ibn al-'As. It was only natural that such a town, which served as the regular crossing-place of the Nile on the way to Alexandria, and, at the same time, as point of departure for the Wādî 'n-Naṭrûn, was not to be surrendered without resistance. And, although the Romans suffered defeat, at least they saved their honour ⁽²⁾. Not very much later, the former battle-ground was transformed into a large welcoming stage, for we are informed, that there went out from the Wādî 'n-Naṭrûn seventy thousand monks, each one having a staff in his hand, and they went to Terenuthis to salute 'Amr ibn al-'As on his return from Alexandria and to implore his protection for them and for their monasteries ⁽³⁾.

After Isaac, the future patriarch (686-689 A. D.), had run away from his parental home in order to enter the desert, he sought refuge in Terenuthis, so as to avoid the searches of his parents, who were looking for him in the desert ⁽⁴⁾. By this time, Terenuthis, as an important episcopal see, a monastic centre, and a trading town, must have enjoyed prosperity and status. Peter, a bishop of Terenuthis (Tarnût) is mentioned as having participated in the deliberations of the Synod, which assembled in 743 A.D. for the election of Mikhâil I, the 46th Patriarch of Alexandria ⁽⁵⁾,

⁽¹⁾ O'LEARY, De Lacy, *The Saints of Egypt*. London, 1937, p. 122.

⁽²⁾ BUTLER, Alfred, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*. Oxford, 1902, p. 283. LANE-POOLE, Stanley, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*. London, 1925, p. 10.

⁽³⁾ QUATREMÈRE, Et., *Mémoires géographiques et historiques sur l'Égypte*. Paris, 1811, vol. I, p. 464.

⁽⁴⁾ PORCHER, E., « Vie d'Isaac Patriarche d'Alexandrie de 686 à 689 », *Patr. Orient.* XI, pp. 314 and 386.

⁽⁵⁾ EVETTS, B.T.A., « The History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church », *Patr. Orient.* V, pp. 106-107.

and during the patriarchate of John IV (777-799 A.D.), the relics of St. Macarius, which were stolen shortly after his death, were returned from the town of Elmi (?) to the Monastery of St. Macarius. At Terenuthis (Tarnût), the relics were taken off the ship and then carried into the desert⁽¹⁾.

According to the xth century Arab geographer Ibn Hauqal⁽²⁾, Terenuthis was situated on both banks of the Nile, and, in addition to a large mosque, the town had baths, well constructed markets, sugar mills and stores for grain and a large number of churches, which were ministered to by priests and monks. These buildings were, for the most part, constructed of brick, but by the xth century, a great part of the city was in ruin. Terenuthis had experienced the fury of the kitâma⁽³⁾, a Berber tribe, who under the order of Abû'l-Kâsim, the eldest son of 'Ûbaidallâh (934-946)⁽⁴⁾, had camped there. In the xth century, Terenuthis was the residence of a governor, who had a regiment under his orders⁽⁵⁾.

On more than one occasion, the destiny of the Christian community in Egypt was determined in Terenuthis. During the violent persecutions of the Faṭimid Caliph al-Hâkim (996-1021), Zakhariâh, the 64th Patriarch of Alexandria (1004-1032), after having been set free by al-Hâkim, went to the monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn. At the same time, however, al-Hâkim commissioned an amîr from Miṣr (Cairo) and a group of workmen to go to the desert in order to demolish the churches and the desert monasteries. Yet, when they arrived at Tarnût⁽⁶⁾, they changed their mind because of their fear of the Arabs⁽⁷⁾. The monasteries

⁽¹⁾ « The Ethiopian Synaxar », *Patr. Orient.* IX, pp. 355 ff.

⁽²⁾ Ibn Hauqal is known for the geography written in 977, which is a revision and extension of the *Masâlik wa'l-Mamâlik* of al-Istakhrî, who wrote in 951. Ed. De Goeje, M.J., Leiden, 1873, p. 90.

⁽³⁾ LANE-POOLE, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

⁽⁴⁾ LANE-POOLE, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

⁽⁵⁾ QUATREMÈRE, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 353-355.

⁽⁶⁾ Tarnût is the Arabic form of Terenuthis, a name which was used prior to that of Tarrâna. Cf. QUATREMÈRE, *loc. cit.*

⁽⁷⁾ AZIZ SURYAL ATIYA, YASSA 'ABD AL-MASÎH, O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*. II, II, Cairo, 1948, p. 200.

and the churches remained unmolested. Another brief reference to the town of Tarnût as a Coptic episcopal see is found in the journal of the xith century Arab traveller 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Azîz 'Ubaid al-Bakhrî⁽¹⁾. Idrîsî, the xiith century Arab geographer just mentions the small village of Tarnût, which was fairly well populated, and where there was a great deal of commerce⁽²⁾. By the xiiith century, the new Arabic name of Tarrâna was well established. The town continued its prosperous conditions on account of its strategic situation, especially with regard to the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn. Khalîl ad-Dahirî (1189) informs us that the surroundings of Tarrâna were occupied by powerful tribes of Arab Bedouins, who were continually at war with each other. An old man, whose testimony he quotes, related that in a single engagement three thousand horsemen had been found dead in the field of battle⁽³⁾. In 1264, az-Zâhir Baybars I (1260-1277), the Mamluk Sultan, paid a visit to the monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn, and on his way he stopped in Tarrâna⁽⁴⁾. For that matter, coming either from Cairo or from Alexandria, the harbour of Tarrâna provided the most convenient possibility for visiting the Coptic monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn. When Benjamin II, the 82nd Patriarch of Alexandria (1327-1339), went to the Monastery of St. Bishoi on account of a disaster which had befallen that monastery, he too stayed overnight on his way in Tarrâna, travelling from there to the Monastery of St. Macarius and then north to the Monastery of St. Bishoi⁽⁵⁾. During the month of Ramadân 872 A.H. (March 1468), Sultan Malik Ashraf Abul Nasr Şerif ad-Dîn

⁽¹⁾ Quoted by TOUSSOUN, O., *Etude sur le Wadi Natroun*. Alexandria, 1931, p. 35.

⁽²⁾ JAUBERT, A., *Géographie d'Edrisi*. Paris, 1836. Vol. I, p. 324. DOZY, R. and DE GOEJE, M.J., *Description de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne par Edrisi*. Leyde, 1866, p. 190.

⁽³⁾ SCHEFER, Charles, *Etude sur la Devise des Chemins de Babiloine*. Archives de l'Orient Latin, Paris, 1884, Vol. II, p. 99.

⁽⁴⁾ QUATREMÈRE, Et., *Histoire des sultans mamlouks de l'Egypte*. London, 1837. Vol. I, p. 246. SADEQUE, SYEDAH FATIMA, *Baybars I of Egypt*. Pakistan, Oxford Press, 1956, p. 233.

⁽⁵⁾ EVELYN-WHITE, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

Qaitbât spent several days at Tarrâna⁽¹⁾, afterwards, finding Bardbak, the simple inspector of this small town to be quite excessive, he promoted him and gave him the governorship of Safad⁽²⁾.

Like the Patriarchs and Sultans, the mediaeval pilgrims to the monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn also stopped at Tarrâna, which was known to the xvth century Franks as 'Alterana'. It seems that the Christian population of the town, which, by this time, had decreased to a very small minority, tried to offer its services to guide visitors across the desert to the monasteries. Josse van Ghistele (1481-1484) lodged in Tarrâna because one of his servants insisted that he should visit the fine Monastery of St. Macarius, which merited the trouble of being seen, and which happened to be « in the neighbourhood »⁽³⁾.

A brief reference to Tarrâna is included in the diary of Sultan al-Ashraf (1501-1516), who in January 1515 travelled from Damanhûr via Nadjâla to Tarrâna, where he spent a day and a night⁽⁴⁾. The fact, that lodging facilities for travellers must have existed in Tarrâna, was an additional reason for government officials to stay there rather than in any of the neighbouring villages. By the xviith century, the number of European pilgrims and visitors to the monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn had significantly increased⁽⁵⁾, and the inhabitants of Tarrâna charged two piastres for each horse from the town to the Monastery of St. Macarius, and four piastres for each horseman, who accompanied the travellers to provide the necessary protection⁽⁶⁾. By this time, Tarrâna was the residence of the *cachef*, who was in charge of the desert-frontiers

⁽¹⁾ IBN IYAS, *Histoire des Mamlouks Circassiens*. (Transl. Gaston Wiet) Cairo, 1945. Vol. II, p. 116. Also, GUEST, A.R., « The Delta in the Middle Ages », *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1912, p. 978.

⁽²⁾ IBN IYAS, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁽³⁾ SAINT-GÉNOIS, *Les Voyageurs Belges en XII^e-XVII^e siècle*. Brussels, n.d., pp. 169-170.

⁽⁴⁾ WIET, Gaston, *Journal d'un Bourgeois du Caire*. Cairo, 1945. Vol. I, p. 392.

⁽⁵⁾ MEINARDUS, O., *Monks and Monasteries of the Egyptian Deserts*. Cairo, 1961, pp. 136-140, 183-192, 221-225, 251-255.

⁽⁶⁾ COPPIN, J., *Relation des Voyages faits dans la Turquie, la Thébâide et la Barbarie*. London, 1720, p. 344.

of Libya ⁽¹⁾. Travelling through the Nile Delta was by no means always safe as Johann Michael Wansleben, the well-known theologian and historian who visited Egypt in 1672, testified. Sailing up the Western Branch of the Nile from Rosetta to Tarrâna, a trivial incident inspired the local Arabs of Tarrâna with a fantastic idea of his wealth, and a plot being laid to waylay and murder him, Wansleben was forced to abandon his project to visit the Coptic monasteries. However, during his stay in Tarrâna, he gathered some valuable information concerning the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn monasteries ⁽²⁾. No doubt, Wansleben met the *hegoumenos* and some of the monks of the Dair as-Suriân, who until 1774 used to reside in Tarrâna ⁽³⁾, when the dependency was transferred to the nearby village of Atrîs.

About one hundred years after Wansleben's visit to Tarrâna, C.S. Sonnini de Manoncour (1777-1780) visited the town. Apparently, however, the situation in terms of safety for European visitors had not changed, and the account of the former French naval officer reflects in many ways a very similar picture to that given by Wansleben. « A *cachef* resided in Tarrâna, a town well enclosed and entirely built with mud-bricks as are all the villages of these districts. In the surroundings, one sees rubbish-heaps, vestiges of the ancient Terenuthis. The ruins are actually known in the country as Abou Bellou. The population of Tarrâna is wicked and ferocious, and the absence of the *cachef*, who was with the army, makes it still more dangerous. We were insulted and threatened there. They had heard there the news of my journey to the desert, and, according to the custom, they said that I had found treasures there. My boat was believed to be laden with them (treasures), and the inhabitants of Tarrâna formed a plan of taking them away during the

⁽¹⁾ COPPIN, *loc. cit.*

⁽²⁾ VANSLEB, J.M., *Nouvelle Relation en forme de Journal d'un Voyage fait en Egypte en 1672 et 1673*. Paris, 1677, p. 227. The potential danger for Western travellers in the past is also attested by the experience of F.L. Griffith. An attack of the fellahin upon the bedouins had taken place. At the time of his visit in 1887, they were expecting vengeance at any moment. GRIFFITH, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁽³⁾ Monks of the Dair as-Suriân, *Sirat al-Anbâ Yuhannis Kame, tarîkh Dair as-Suriân*. Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn, 1951, p. 55.

night. We informed our guards as some people were wandering about on the river-bank, but none of them dared to approach us. There was a Turk, who made very good gun-powder. This poor creature, who was young, had a white beard and a strangled voice from the effect of the fear which 'Alî Bey caused him, who, suspecting him of supplying powder to the Bedouins, whom he wished to destroy, ordered, that they should behead him, an order, which the tyrant, however, revoked for the moment and which also made a great impression»⁽¹⁾. In 1789, Tarrâna became the inland port for the export of natron from the salt-lakes to Marseille, and thus its significance as a trading-centre increased considerably⁽²⁾.

During the last decade of the xviiith century, W.G. Brown visited Tarrâna and the ruins of Kôm Abû Billo « where are many columns and other considerable remains, which indicate the site of ancient structures». The buildings of Tarrâna were constructed chiefly of « unburned brick», but there were also some stone-buildings. The town belonged to Murad Bey, who, however, had entrusted the collection of the revenue there to Mr. Carlo Rosseti, a Venetian merchant. Mr. Rosseti, well-known throughout Egypt, was recently appointed consul-general of the Emperor of Germany⁽³⁾, and the authority which he had obtained over the district of Tarrâna was almost equal to that exercised in former days by the *cachefs*. In order to control the shipments of natron from the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn to Tarrâna, and from there to the various nations of Europe, Mr. Rosseti had sent as his deputy Mr. Ferrari, his nephew, to reside in Tarrâna. In spite of the « Slavonian» soldiers, who were under his authority for his protection, Mr. Ferrari died after a short time « not without suspicion of poison»⁽⁴⁾. Most of the travellers who passed through Tarrâna merely provided us with a brief mention of the name

⁽¹⁾ SONNINI, C.S., *Voyage dans la Haute et Basse Egypte*. Paris, An. VII de la Rep., Vol. II, pp. 227-228.

⁽²⁾ TRÉCOURT, J.B., *Mémoires sur l'Egypte*. Cairo, 1942, pp. 25, 91. SAVARY, *Lettres sur l'Egypte*. Paris, 1786, Vol. I, p. 73.

⁽³⁾ This must have been Francis II.

⁽⁴⁾ BROWNE, W.G., *Travels in Africa, Egypt and Syria from the year 1792-1798*. London, 1799, p. 36.

of the town ⁽¹⁾ although Heinrich Brugsch, who went from Tarrâna to the Monastery of the Syrians, informs us that at the very end of the village there was a respectable house of European appearance, which was the summer-residence of Mr. Gibara, the leaseholder of the lakes of the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn ⁽²⁾.

Petersen is correct in stating that « the modern town of Tarrâna is not mentioned by most guidebook for travellers in Egypt » ⁽³⁾. Yet, in Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Lower and Upper Egypt*, Tarrâna is referred to as the first stop on the way to the desert monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Naṭrûn, and the travellers are advised to contact « the headman of Tarrâna, a Copt, from whom it is well to get an introduction to the *qummu* of the Dair Macarius » ⁽⁴⁾.

In the XIXth century and until 1930, the Dair al-Barâmûs possessed a small dependency in Tarrâna, in addition to the dependency at Tûkh Dalaka ⁽⁵⁾. In the Church of the Holy Virgin in Tarrâna, there are two lectionaries of 1858 ⁽⁶⁾ and 1898 ⁽⁷⁾. The colophon of the 1858 manuscript indicates that it is the property of the « waqf of al-Barâmûs ». In addition, I have seen a Ritual of 1851 with the following colophon : « Waqf of the Church of the Lady the Mistress at Akhîṭ at-Tarrâna by the Qummu Girgis, Minister of the Church of the Lady the Mistress at

⁽¹⁾ JOLIFFE, T.R., *Lettres sur la Palestine, la Syrie et l'Égypte*. Paris, 1817, p. 296. CURZON, Robert, *Visits to the Monasteries in the Levant*. London, 1847, p. 92. WILKINSON, G., *Modern Egypt and Thebes*. London, 1843, vol. I, p. 387. TISCHENDORF, K., *Travels in the East*. London, 1847, p. 45. GRAUL, K., *Reise durch Egypten*. Leipzig, 1854, p. 242.

⁽²⁾ BRUGSCH, Heinrich, *Reiseberichte aus Ägypten, 1853-1854*. Leipzig, 1855, p. 16.

⁽³⁾ PETERSEN, *op. cit.*, 154.

⁽⁴⁾ MURRAY, John, *Murray's Handbook for Travellers in Lower and Upper Egypt*. London, 1880, Vol. II, p. 306.

⁽⁵⁾ MEINARDUS, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

⁽⁶⁾ This lectionary measures 34 × 24 cm. with 22 lines. The text, which is in Coptic only, measures 24 × 16 cm.

⁽⁷⁾ This lectionary measures 50 × 37 cm. with 28 lines. The text, which is in Coptic and Arabic, measures 27 (21 and 6) × 42 cm. The richly illuminated manuscript was written by 'Abd al-Shahîd 'Abd-al-Malik of Atrîs.

al-Barâmûs»⁽¹⁾. The former Dependency of the Dair al-Barâmûs, which was situated in the southern part of the town, is now owned by Haggî Mikhâil, though the land, approximately thirty feddan, still belongs to the monastery. According to Abûnâ Sama'an Sa'id, the village-priest of Tarrâna, the Dair al-Barâmûs also owned the house next to the church, where Cyril V, the 112th Patriarch of Alexandria (1874-1927), used to receive distinguished visitors whom he accompanied to the desert monastery⁽²⁾. Moreover, the villagers remember, that until the days of John XIX, the 113th Patriarch of Alexandria (1928-1942)⁽³⁾, there was also a « novitiate » for the Dair al-Barâmûs in Tarrâna.

The parish of Tarrâna consists of altogether seven villages, including al-Khaṭāṭba, Kôm Hamâdah and Kafr Dâwûd. According to the parish-priest, approximately five hundred Christians belong to the parish. The Church of the Holy Virgin in Tarrâna, which belongs to the diocese of Beḥaira (Tanta), was rebuilt in 1960. The church has three altars, which are dedicated to St. Michael (north), the Holy Virgin (centre) and St. George (south). The xixth century iconostasis is adorned with icons of St. Michael, the Holy Virgin, the Mystical Supper, St. Dimiana and her Forty Virgins and St. George. The Twelve Apostles on the top of the iconostasis are recent paintings of inferior quality. In the north-west corner of the church, there stands a *kouvouklion* with a modern icon of the Crucifixion. In the south-east corner of the church are the stairs that lead to the gallery. The present Christian cemetery, known as Baltûs is a small *kôm* which is situated south of Tarrâna⁽⁴⁾. The land south of this *kôm* belongs to the Department of Antiquities, though no excavations have taken place there as yet.

According to the 1960 census figures, there are 240 Christians in Tarrâna⁽⁵⁾, though the village-priest states that only two or three Christian families are originally from Lower Egypt. Most Christians have come

⁽¹⁾ BURMESTER, O.H.E. KHS-, *The Egyptian or Coptic Church. A Detailed Description of her Liturgical Services*. Cairo, 1967, p. 316, n. 5.

⁽²⁾ Cyril V used to be a monk at the Dair al-Barâmûs.

⁽³⁾ John XIX used to be a monk at the Dair al-Barâmûs.

⁽⁴⁾ JUNKER, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁽⁵⁾ *Population Census of 1960* (Behaira Province). Cairo n.d. Vol. I, p. 100.

from Upper Egypt and settled in Tarrâna during the xixth century. The most notable Christian family of Tarrâna is that of Ibrâhîm Bey Dâûd with a holding of approximately four hundred feddan.

The total population for Tarrâna is given as 4,020 ⁽¹⁾, of whom 993 work in agriculture, 123 in mining, 40 in industry, 14 in construction, 42 in trade, 82 in transport, 86 in general services and 6 in other occupations ⁽²⁾. The Muslim population amounts to 3,780 peoples. There are three mosques in Tarrâna, which are named after the families, who donated to the construction of the buildings. There is the Mosque of Issa, the Mosque of Mishadet, and the Mosque of Shiha. The Muslim cemetery is situated west of the town and north of the road which leads from the agricultural road to the town. The *qubba* of Shaikh 'Abdullah, which is situated in the cemetery, is said to have been originally the tomb of a certain 'Abd al-Malik.

⁽¹⁾ *Population Census of 1960* (Behaira Province). Cairo n.d. Vol. I, p. 72.

⁽²⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 144.



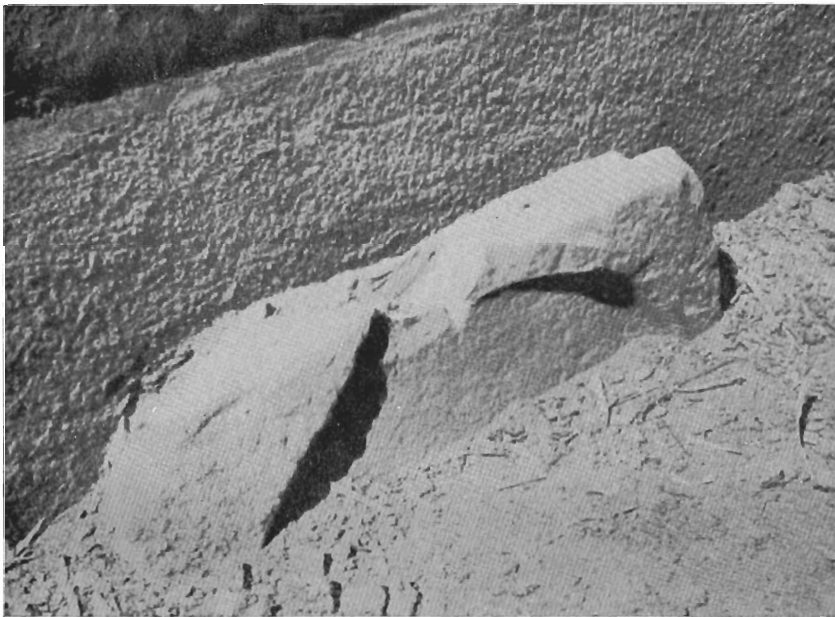
A. — The extensive ruins of Kôm Abû Billo.



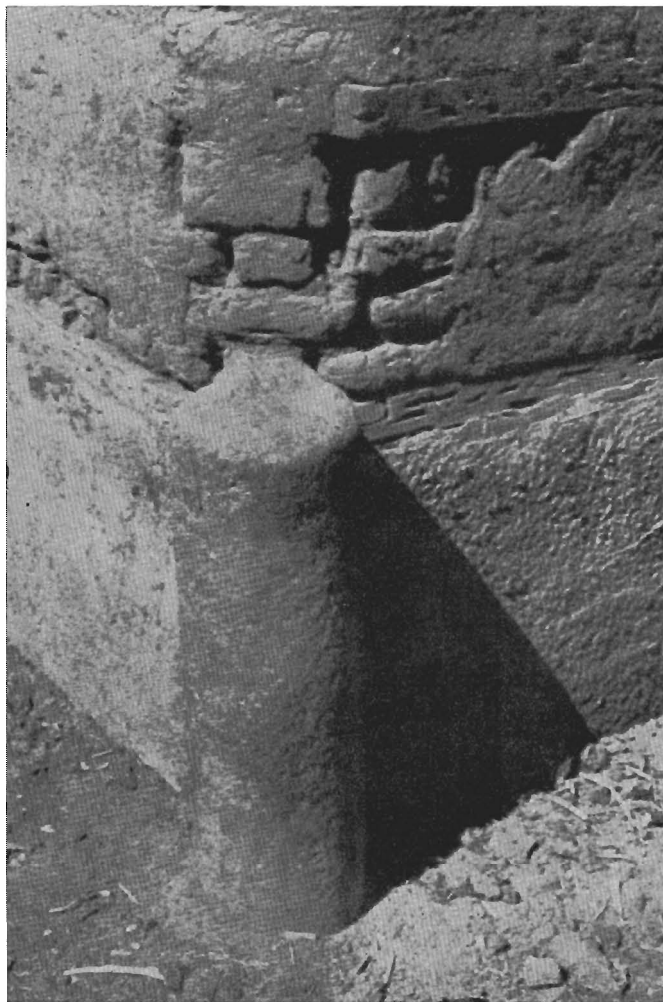
B. — The sepulchral chapel at Kôm Abû Billo.



A. — View of Tarrâna from the west.



B. — Ancient millstone in Tarrâna near the Church of the Holy Virgin.



Ancient column in Tarrâna near the Church
of the Holy Virgin.



The Church of the Holy Virgin, Tarrâna.

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