

Letters from the East
from Richard Pococke to Bishop Milles, 1737-39
Part 1:
Letters from Egypt (1737-38)



Edited by Rachel Finnegan

Pococke Press 2014

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Preface

The thirty-four letters in this series of transcripts were sent by the Reverend Richard Pococke to his uncle, Thomas Milles, Bishop of Waterford & Lismore, during the first half of his eastern voyage (September 1737 to March 1739). They are described by Pococke as “accounts”, and comprise detailed observations on the history, geography and antiquities of the east, often accompanied by references to and quotations from the works of classical authors such as Herodotus, Strabo, Virgil, Vitruvius and Pliny. This illustrates the amount of books he took with him, or otherwise had access to, on his eastern voyage. While the letters are largely devoid of personal content, Pococke frequently asked his mother (the bishop’s sister) to abridge and send to his uncle the more chatty correspondence which he dispatched to her every two to three weeks in the form of a daily journal (2013).¹ Though only thirty-four letters have survived in this collection, we know from letters to his mother, that Pococke continued to write to his uncle even after his death in 1740, unaware that he had finally succumbed to gallstones, from which he had suffered for many years.

While the original letters to Bishop Milles are lost, fair copies were made and bound into a large folio volume now in the British Library, and catalogued as “Register of Letters from R. Pococke to Bishop of Waterford” (Add. 15779). We know from autograph letters that the bishop himself was not the copyist, and it is clear from the rather clumsy quotations (and sometimes blanks later filled in by Pococke) that the scribe was not proficient in writing Greek. Presumably these copy letters were given to Pococke on his return to England, either by his mother or by cousin and former travelling companion, Jeremiah Milles, who had by then inherited the bishop’s estate, including all his personal effects. The bishop’s letters to Pococke, if indeed he sent any, have not survived.

The reader who is following Pococke’s book, *A Description of the East & some other Countries* (London, 1743 & 45) will observe that, save for minor alterations in punctuation, certain letters (such as those describing the route from Leghorn to Alexandria) are virtually identical to the corresponding sections of his published work.²

With the exception of Letter 19, an uncharacteristically personal letter (reproduced as Letter 19A in R. Finnegan, 2013),³ these letters have not previously been published. The editor has retained the original punctuation and spelling throughout, with the occasional insertion of “sic” where appropriate. In general the editor’s notes are kept to a minimum.

Biographical accounts of Richard Pococke and Thomas Milles can be found in Volume 1 of *Letters from Abroad* (2011), and details of the editor’s published works on Pococke’s eastern collections, and Thomas Milles’ career in Oxford and Waterford, can be found in the section on “Recent Publications”, at http://www.pocockepress.com/about_editor.php.

The editor is grateful to the British Library Board for permission to reproduce this manuscript material (Add. 15779) here for the first time. All illustrations are taken from Pococke’s *A Description of the East & some Other Countries*, Volume 1.

¹R. Finnegan (ed.), *Letters from Abroad: the Grand Tour Correspondence of Richard Pococke & Jeremiah Milles, Volume 3: Letters from the Continent (1736-41)*, Pococke Press, Kilkenny, 2013

²However, the latter account differs from that given in the only surviving Note Book from Pococke’s eastern voyage - “A Voyage From Leghorn To [Alexandria]”, Add. 22995, Vol. XVIII.

³*Op.cit.*, 156-58.

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LEGHORN [LIVORNO]

20/31 September, 1737

Pococke to Bishop Milles

Letter 1⁴

My Lord,

Mr Milles [Jeremiah] has set his face towards England from Trent, which place I left 28th of August old style, and travelled by Mantoua, Mirandola, Modena, Bologna, and Florence to this place, where I came on the 4th of September old stile, and found here the Mary Capt Parkins bound to Alexandria, and in company with two Franciscans from the Propaganda Fide, I hope to be in a fortnight in Alexandria; the ship being ready to sail so that probably I shall be in Egypt a fortnight before this comes to your Lordships hands.

If we sail immediately I shall not have time to give your Lordship an account of what I saw in the way to this place. But I shall from time to time forward to your Lordship a relation of what I observe in the East, tho it is probable twill be Midsummer before your Lordship will hear from me.

I earnestly beg your Lordships blessing and prayers.

And am with the greatest respect and submission,

My Lord your Lordships

ALEXANDRIA IN EGYPT

30 September/11 October, 1737

Pococke to Bishop Milles

Letter 2⁵

The sea south of Sicily was called by the Antients Mare Libycum or Africum, which sea comprehended that part of the Mediterranean which is on the coast of Africa, from the entrance into this sea at the Columnae Herculis, or the streights of Gibraltar, to the East bounds of Cyzeniaca where the Egyptian sea begun. This is commonly called the sea of Barbary along the Africk coast and on the side of Sicily the sea goes by the name of the Channel of Malta.

When we approached Sicily I found we were sailing along the same coast by which Aneas made his voyage, and as I had a veiw of the citys and places on the shoar, I could not but observe the justice, and poetical beauties, of the descriptions, of the great masters of Latin Epicks.

As soon as we had doubled the South West point of Sicily we saw the city of Mazra, the old Mazara, from whence one third part of Sicily is called Vala di Mazara. Somewhat East of it, was the famous city of Selinus, which was destroyed before Strabo's time, the Poet makes mention of it as abounding in palm trees.

⁴ The letters in the manuscript are not numbered, but unless stated otherwise appear in their original order.

⁵British Library, Add. 15779. A note in Pococke's hand states, "This letter to be place after the other, of the same date".

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Teq[ue] datis linquo ventis palmosa Selenius.⁶

We after had a very plain veiw of the city of Ziacca on the side of a hill.

Sailing on I saw the city of Girgenti on the side of a hill being built up to the top of it, about four miles from the sea. This was the city of Agrigentum where the Tyran Phalaris resided. This city remained when most of the other citys on the south of Sicily were destroyed in the Carthaginian wars. It was first a Colony of Ionians, and after a Colony was brought thither from the cities of Sicily by F: Manlius the Orator. Under the greek name Acragas Virgil describes its eminent situation as well as mentions its having been formerly famous for a fine breed of horses

Arduus inde Acragas ostentat maxima longe
Moenia magnanimum quondam generator equorum⁷

At the same time I had a plain veiw [sic] of Mount Aetna, which now among the vulgar goes by the name of Mount Gibelto, it is seen almost all along the South and East coast of Sicily. I discerned a very little smoak ascending from the top of it. This mountain so famous among the antients, is very beautifully described by Virgil, as seen by Aeneas from the coasts of the Cyclops, about Catana, where Ulysses had put in not long before, and where both of them met with such extraordinary adventures in relation to Polyphemus, according to the Poets.

I saw after Cape Lescate, at the mount of the river Salso, the old Himera, near which was a castle called Phalerium where it is said the brazen bull was kept. There is also a river called Rocetta, which runs into the sea North of Sicily the source of which is near the fountain of the Salso, and the Rocetta was formerly also called the Mimera. Which gave occasion to the antients to frame something very strange that these two rivers were one river called Himera, and that part of the river run North and the other part South, and that one part of it was sweet water, and the other salt of which Vitruvius gives the true cause that one part of this river or rather on of these rivers passed thro' places where they dug salt, for in the middle of the Island, about the source of the river Salso, are mines of rock salt which probably is the reason of the modern name of this river.

Further East I saw a city called Terra Nova, near a river of the same name, this is supposed to be Geta, with the river of the same name, mentioned also by the Poet.

Apparet Camarine procul Campiq[ue] Geloi
Immanisq[ue] Gela, fluvii Cognomina dicta.⁸

There is but one place more mentioned by Virgil, as also on the South of Sicily, which was in ruins in Strabo's time. The place where it stood is now called Camarana; the old name of the city being Camarina, a colony of the Syracusans.

⁶ Virgil's *Aeneid* III, 705.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 703-4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 701-2

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We had a sight of Malta at a great distance, and at length, came up with Cape Palsaro, the old Promontorium Pachnum astisa peninsula, and the land very low to the West of it, so it appears at a distance like an island with a castle on it built to hinder ships from coming in there to lay in wait for other ships. The ground of the Cape is very foul and ships cannot come to anchor there without danger of cutting their cables, so that it answers very well to the poets description of it.

Hinc altas cautes projecta[ue] saxa Pachigni [Pachyni]
Radimus.⁹

Over the point we saw the high lands of [...] Syracuse.

East of Sicily is that sea which by the antients was called first Mare Ausonium and afterwards Mare Siculum. It extended from the Fretum Siculum to the Promontory of Iapygia in Italy, to the mouth of the Adriatick sea, to the Sinus Ambracius in Greece, and as far as Crete, having the Mare Africum to the South. I do not find any particular name for this sea at present, but the mariners call all these seas as far as the Adriatick by the general name of the Mediterranean, as they call the Seas Eastward the Levant.

We lost sight of Sicily on the 21st Sepr O:S the 2^d October N:S in the evening and making a great run on the 24th-5th in the morning we could discern the high mountains of Candia north of us, the Island of Crete of the antients so renowned for the reign of Jupiter and the wise government of Minos, as well as for being the scene of many of the fables of the antients.

From Crete Eastward near to Cyprus the sea was called Mare Aegyptium, extending Westward on the coast of Africa to Cyreniaca, where the Mare Africum began.

On the 29th Sepr. O:S 8th October N:S we came in sight of the coast of Africa about Point Solyman in the Kingdom of Barca just on the confines of Egypt which was that part of Marmarica, about Catabathmus parvus or the little valley, where was the famous Temple of Jupiter Ammon, Alexander went to with so much difficulty to consult the Oracle, and near it was a famous fountain of the Sun which they say was cold at noon, began to grow warm at night, and was very hot at midnight.

The next day we came in sight of the Tower of Arabia, and the day after of Alexandria, and as we approached it, we had a very agreeable [sic] prospect of the famous column, of the walls of the old city, of the country covered with Date trees which grow to a great height [sic], and appear like tall pines pruned up, and also of palm trees rising up above the buildings of the city. And so on Thursday evening the 29th of Sepr 10th of October we happily arrived in the port of Alexandria after a very pleasant and agreeable voyage of twenty three days.

I am with the greatest respect and submission,

My Lord

⁹Virgil's *Aeneid*, III, 699-700.

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A ship going out this morning I take the opportunity to send these letters to Leghorn, and if I have time shall send by the same an account of my journey to Leghorn, but if not I shall send these letters by the next opportunity. The Consul of Cairo [Mr Barton] being here I beleive [sic] I shall go with him to Cairo, and thence after some time proceed on my voyage.

Any letter directed to me to be left with Cutts Maydwell Esqr Turkey Mercht in London, will be conveyed to me by first opportunity.

ALEXANDRIA IN EGYPT

30 September/11 October, 1737

Pococke to Bishop Milles

Letter 3¹⁰

On Tuesday evening September 6th O:S 17 N:S I embarked at Leghorn aboard an English ship the Mary Galley Captain Thomas Parkins, bound for Alexandria in Egypt. The next day we sailed out of the road of Leghorn. This sea is now called the Tuscan sea, and was formerly known by the name of the Mare Tyrrhenm, and Mare Inferum lying between Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily and that part of Italy which is on this side of the Republic of Genoua, the old Liguria. We sailed about two leagues from the Island of Gorgona, which is like a high rocky mountain, the cliffs of which are almost perpendicular all round, except in one place to the East, where is the small port of Gorgona, which is the only entrance to the Island being a shelter for small fishing boats. Over it the Grand Duke has a fortress with about twenty soldiers in it, who by their situation are capable of hindering the landing of a considerable body of men. In this port live some fishermen, who cheifly [sic] are employed in catching Anchovies. We after sailed to the East of the Island of Capraia, the Capraria of Pliny. The Island is about two leagues long and one broad, being mountainous and rocky. We had a plain veiw of the only town in it of the same name of the Island which is situated on the high ground over the sea to the East, at the South of it is a large castle on a rock, and the town extends to the north to a small bay, in which there is a fishing village; the cheif support of this Island being a trade in fish which they carry to Leghorn. In the town is a Franciscan convent which belongs to the Province of Corsica, this Island being subject to the Genoese.

We after passed by the Isla of Elba, the Ilva of the antients. It is about five leagues long and three broad. Pliny says it was, a hundred miles round of which it may not fall much short, there being a great number of bays and creeks in it. The North part of this Island with the Port of Ferraro, and a Castle called Cosmopoli belongs to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the South part (except Porto Longone) which belongs to the Spaniards and all along is within Canon shot of the fortress being subject to the Duke of Piombino. It is in the territories of the latter that the iron ore is found & tis said that having dug the ore out of the pits after leaving them for about thirty years they find Iron ore in them again which perhaps gave rise to what Virgil says of it.

¹⁰A note in Pococke's hand states, "This letter to be place before the other, of the same date".

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Insula inexhaustis Ilva Chalybum generosa metallis.¹¹

And this also may be the reason of what Pliny affirms, that there had been more iron dug out of it in three thousand years, than the whole Island would contain. His words are Unde per tria annorum millia, plus esset ferri egestum quam tota contineret insula. They have a vulgar notion that the iron cannot be melted here, which possibly may be owing to what Strabo saies of the Isle of Aethalia, by many thought to be Elba, who says they could not melt the iron on the spot, but carried the ore immediately to the continent melting or running, but it is more probable that they had not the conveniency of wood for their foundries in a small Island.

Three leagues South West of Elba West of Elba we saw the flat Island of Planosa called by the Romans Planasia. The land of it is so low that it cannot be seen at above four or five leagues distance. I am informed that ruins of houses and castles are seen on it from the sea, when they sail near it, that fishermen and others go there in the day time, but that it is not inhabited for fear of the Corsairs. This island belongs to the Duke of Piombino.

Four leagues South of Elba we saw the Island of Monte Christo, which appears like one high mountain, it is now uninhabited, and I have many reasons to think that it is the Αιθαλια/Aethalia of Strabo, which has so much puzzled the Geographers, many of whom have taken it to be Elba, but as Strabo himself was at Populonium on the promontory of Piombino, and saw all these Islands himself from thence, we cannot suppose he could be mistaken, and he in another place mentions both Ilva and Aethalia, he also makes Aethalia equally distant from Corsica and Populonium, that is three hundred stadia or thirty seven miles and a half, and Monte Christo answers exactly measuring on the sea charts about twelve leagues from each or thirty six miles. There is also no other Island except Capraia beyond Elba which can be seen from Populonium on this side Corsica and Sardinia: and Monte Christo being so near Elba, is most likely to partake of the nature of the soil of Elba producing Iron ore in the same manner, which grew again in the pits. The knowledge of which may be lost by reason that the Island is become uninhabited. Strabo mentions the port Αργως/Argos in this Island which he observes (according to fabulous history) was said to be so called from Jasons touching these with the ship Argos when he was in search of the habitation of Circe, Medea being desirous to see that Goddess.

Four leagues South West of Giglio we could but just see the flat Island of Dianisa thought to be Dianium of Pliny called by the Greeks Αρτεμισια and Αρτεμιτα.

We had a considerable time a sight of the Island of Corsica, and a plain view of the town of Batia on the East side of it, on the flat shoar.

We were several days East of Sardinia, having often a sight of that Island. Since we left Leghorn we were often becalmed, and met with contrary winds, so that we did not see Sicily till the thirteenth day from the time we set sail; tho' the voyage in other respects was by no means unpleasant, having very fine weather.

We were not a great way from the most Western of the Liparae Island, called Ustica, which I take to be the Isle Ευωνυμος of Strabo, to agree with whose description of it the old Geographers in their

¹¹ Virgil's *Aeneid* X, 174.

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maps have made an Island South East of the rest & call it Euonymus because Strabo says it is the farthest to the left sailing from the Isle of Lipara to Sicily, and that from thence it had its name. But for reasons I shall mention I apprehend that Strabo meant it was on the left sailing from Sicily to the Isle of Lipara, for he says this Island is farthest out in the sea of any of them, as he expressed it Πελαγία θαλασσα which could not properly be said of an island to the South East of the others, because that would be nearer to the land both of Italy and Sicily, and if it were not for this objection it might be an island called Volcanello South East of Volcano at a very little distance from it and a very small Island that has a smoaking Volcano, the other Volcano breaking out in flames. I must observe that all the maps especially those of the old Geographers are very false with regard to these Islands, and find the Sea Charts are most to be depended on for the number and situation of the Islands, tho' I find de Lisle's map only right in making two Volcano islands, a great and little one, who notwithstanding if I am rightly informed, is mistaken in placing the little one to the North, which ought to be in the South East. I could not but please my self with the imagination, that I was near the place, where the Romans at the Lipara Island gained their first sea victory in a most signal engagement with the Carthaginians under the conduct of the Consul Duilius who was not only honoured for it in a solemn manner but had a sort of triumph decreed him during his whole life; and the famous Columna rostrata erected to his honour, which is now to be seen in Rome with its long inscription, and is one of the greatest and most curious peices of antiquity remaining being about two thousand years old.

I saw Cape Gallo, which is very near the port of Palermo, and falling in with the West of Sicily we sailed between the Islands called by the antients Aegates; tho in all the maps we see particular names given them by the old Geographers; yet I cant find that the old names of these three Island are certainly known, that to the North East opposite to Trapano (from which town it is ten miles distant) is now called Levanzo. South of it is the Isle Favagnana ten miles round, it is a fine fertile spot of ground, being mostly a flat, with a high hill towards the North side, on which are three castles garrison'd by the King of Naples, in one of which the Governor of the Island resides.

This place was a great refuge for the Corsairs, from whence they came out and infested the seas till Charles 5th carried his arms into Africa. The third Island thirty miles West of Trapano is called Maritimo, it appears like a high mountain. To the North East of it is a rocky promontory which is a peninsula, and much lower than the rest of the Island. On this there is a castle built, in which there is kept a garrison. The insula Aegates are most famous for the second signal sea victory obtained here over the Carthaginians by the Romans, under the command of the Consul Lutatius Catulus, concerning which the historian says that after the battle, the whole sea between Sicily and Sardinia was covered with the wreck and ruins of the enemy fleet; and this total defeat put an end to the first Punick war.

The mountain of Trapano is one of the first things that strikes the eye on the West of Sicily, on the top of it is a castle: and at the foot of this hill to the West is a flat point of land that stretches into the sea, on which stands the city of Trapano, on the spot where the antient Drepanum stood the Illaetabilis ora, where according to Virgil, Aeneas left his father Anchises, and where after his return from Carthage he celebrated divine honours to this memory. This place is remarkable for actions, in the Punick wars as well as the small Isle of Columbaria opposite to it. The mountain of Trapano to the

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East, is mount Eryx so famous for the worship of Venus by Aeneas and his followers when he was about to leave behind him the women and the weak people to settle on the Isle as he expresses it

Tum vicina astris Erycino in vertice sedes
Fundatur venere Idaliae¹²

Strabo says that the town on the top of the hill was inhabited by women dedicated to the Goddess Venus by foreign nations as well as by the Sicilians, that in his time it was inhabited by men, and a temple served by priests, who lived in great poverty, the place becoming unfrequented: he adds that the Romans built a temple to this Goddess at Rome without the Porta Collina, called the temple of Venus Erycina, so that it is probable the devotion was removed thither.

South of Trapano I had a plain view of the city of Marzala built where Lilibaenum stood, the port where they usually embarked for Carthage. The promontory and town also are often mentioned in history, especially of the Punic wars. It is said the port was spoiled by the Romans, to hinder the convenient passage of the Carthaginians to and from this port in case they should recover it again, and it was entirely filled up by Don John of Austria in 1567. Augustus brought a Colony to this town. The sea coast being shoaly hereabouts answers in that respect very well to the description of Virgil in this verse, *Et vada dura lego saxa Lilibaia caecis*.¹³

I saw between Sicily and Africa the isle of Pantelera which is the Cosyra of the Romans and the Κοσσυρα (Cossura) of Strabo which he saies is equally distant from Lilybaenum and the city of Aspis or Clupea of the Carthaginians, this is confirmed by the name the inhabitants of Africa now give it in the Arabick language which is Cosra. It belongs to Sicily and is made use of as a place of banishment. South East of this is the isle of Limosa, and a few leagues South of that a larger island called Lampidosa; which did belong to a Christian Hermit, and a Marabut or Turkish hermit, and served as a place, both for Christians and Turks to take in provisions, with agreement that neither of them should suffer from those of a contrary religion. The Marabut dying not long ago, the Corsairs seized on what was in the island, and carried the Christian away captive, of which great complaint was made by the French Consul who demanded the captive. Strabo in three places mentions the Isle Αιγιμωρος [Αιγιμωρος] together with Cossura, and in one place speaking of several small Islands in general as near Cossura and Sicily, he only mentions Aegimurus in particular, and therefore probably it was the largest of them. The three Islands that are near Pantelera or Cossura are, Semetto, Limosa, and Lampidosa, and the last being much the largest it is probable, that it is Aegimurus so called by the Romans also. On this Island in the first Punic war the Carthaginian fleet was shipwrecked in the consulship of Fabius Buteo.

We thought we saw Cape Bona which is the North East promontory of this great bay of Carthage.

I am with the greatest respect and submission,

My Lord

¹²Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book V, 659-60

¹³Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book III, 706.

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ALEXANDRIA IN EGYPT

6/17 October, 1737

Pococke Bishop Milles

Letter 4

I sent two letters to your Lordship giving an account of my voyage this place, dated 30th Sept 11th October, the day after we came into this port, and having an opportunity by a ship going to Marseilles I lay hold of it to do my self the honour to write to your Lordship tho' I have not time to give a regular account of any thing I have seen here

I am come here in a very good time of year, the spring & moderate weather now beginning, which continues to April when the harvest will be over, and all annuals will be burnt up with the heat, it is notwithstanding hot here in the sun during all these months which we call winter in Europe.

I have been very fortunate in meeting Consul Barton here who usually resides at Cairo, from whom I have met with all manner of civilities, and shall have the pleasure to go with him to Cairo, his brother is Rector of St Andrews London, and consequently the Duke of Montague is Patron of the family: so that every thing contributes to make this country very agreeable.

I find great difficulties in examining the scituation [sic] of the old town, and the several parts of it according to the antient authors, the sea having left the shoar on some parts and gained on others; and I have seen modern authors that can give any light in this affair.

Begging your Lordships blessing. I am with the greatest respect & submission

My Lord

GRAND CAIRO

1/12 March, 1738

Pococke to Bishop Milles

Letter 5

I always purposed, to do my self the honour to write to your Lordship a particular account of what I see, whenever I had any time not employed in viewing things, or committing to paper what I have seen. These indeed have so intirely [sic] taken up my whole time, as your Lordship will be convinced, that I have been obliged to lay aside the thoughts, of writing very particularly to your Lordship, having time only to send a rough, tho' I hope pretty exact account of every thing. I cannot however excuse my self from giving you from time to time, a general account of my voyage, not without mentioning some of the most remarkable things in it.

At the entrance of the port of Alexandria is an Isle, commonly taken for the Isle of the Pharos; but it was the island Antirhodos, so frequently mentioned in History, being now, at the East end, joined to the continent.

I saw the famous pillar, and when the sun shined on it, I could just discover some letters of a grec [sic] inscription on the pedestal; but tis so imperfect by the scaling of the stone, that it was very difficult, if not impossible, to make any think of it. I beleive the first word is

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Σεβασιος [Σεβαστος?] ¹⁴ and am inclined to think that it was erected to the honour of some of the later Emperors, as Titus, or Adrian; because Strabo, who so accurately describes Alexandria, and was there, makes no mention of it. West of Alexandria are evident marks of the antient Necropolis; where one sees a great number of habitations for the dead cut out of the rock, and some of them in very regular apartments, one within another.

To the East I traced out, with difficulty the city of Necropolis, built by Augustus, in memory of his victory over Anthony, near this place. These are great remains here of a very large square building, or enclosure, with semicircular turrets all round built very strong. It is commonly called an Amphitheater. I am apt to believe it was a Praesidium; there being such another building exactly at old Cairo, at the foot of that hill, which I conclude to have been the antient Babylon of Egypt, where was a Roman Garrison of one Legion. Farther on this shoar near Bickeern I saw the ruins of two Temples near one another. On is half a mile from the sea, and seems to have been a round building, and several of the red Granite Pillars are lying upon the ground. The other is almost covered by the sea; but there are several statues of Sphinxes, and of the Deity of the Temple the later [latter] being of red Granite. It seems to have been [blank space] and one of them, the temple there dedicated to Venus Arsinoe.

I saw at Alexandria the poor Patriarchal Church of St Mark. They pretend to have his head there, and even his body; tho' the later is more probably at Venice. They shew also his chair, and have a tradition that he as martyred, out of the gate that leads to the column; and the Greecs and the Latins say, that a very large Mosque, near that gate was formerly the Cathedral Church.

I had the pleasure to go a days journey to Rosetto, and up the Nile to Cairo, in company with Consul Barton, whose brother is minister of St Andrews London.

After about three weeks stay at Cairo, I set out for upper Egypt, a very curious voyage, as very little is known of the antiquities of those parts. About a degree and a half above Cairo, at Archmounain, near Maloui I saw a magnificent Portico of a temple, of twelve large pillars, with square capitals, after the Egyptian style [see Plate 1]; for they never received the five orders; tho' they have a variety of capitals. Alexandria indeed under a grec government, and some places, improved by the Romans, shew the utmost perfection, in fine Architecture, but in upper Egypt one sees many temples, which were built before the invention of the five orders. At this place are great signs of a large city, which was probably Hermopolis, capital of the last Nomos in the Heptanomis on the West. What I saw after was in the famous Kingdom of Thebees [sic] called the Province of the Thebais, when the whole land had obtained the name of Egypt.

About sixty miles higher, I saw such another Portico at a place, called Gava, but more beautifull, and every part adorned with Hieroglyphicks of men and other figures. In the ruins of the Temple are very large stones; of men and other figures. In the ruins of the Temple are very large stones; some of which I measured, and found to be thirty feet long, five broad, and about three feet deep. This place I concluded to be the old Antaeopolis so called from Antaeus, whom Hercules conquered [sic] by lifting him from the ground, his mother earth, and who as it is said, was called by Osiris into Egypt.

Higher up is Akmin, the old Panopolis, where I saw very imperfect ruins of two Temples. As to the Grotts of the Thebais which are in the mountains below from Manfalouth to Minio about fifty miles in length they were the places where the antient Egyptians deposited their dead, and to which they brought them from the citys and villages, which were on the West side of the Nile, these were the

¹⁴This word has been inserted in a blank space and has then been corrected, rendering it difficult to accurately transcribe.

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most Grottos, some of which lead by a sloped passage to other apartments, and in many of them there is besides that there is [sic] a perpendicular passage down; and when great persons deposited the bodys of their familys there, they adorned the stone with Hieroglyphicks, which very often is the cause that they are taken from Temples.

The places where the Egyptians deposited their dead were so sacred that Xtians [Christians] in times of persecution, would not dare to approach them; they were so jealous lest any thing should be done that might tend any way to destroy those bodys, they had with so much art endeavoured to preserve. It is true indeed that there are two or three convents cut out of the rock, and there might probably be Hermitages near them, but all these must have been made in much frequented places, after the establishment of Christianity. Before that time, we find that the great retreats of the Christians were to the deserts which were, afterwards called from some of the most eminent of them; as that of St Macarius to the West, and the convents of St Anthony, and St Paul the Hermit in the deserts on the red sea. In these Grottos I saw several pieces of Mummys, & of the linen which they were wrapt in.

Opposite to Akmin are two of the most magnificent convents in Egypt, one of them without doubt was built by the Empress Helena, as I saw the Eagle cut in many parts of it.

Passing by Girge the present capital of Egypt I saw at a ruined place called Amara near Dendyra a Temple the most beautifully adorned with Hieroglyphical figures of men and animals of any I had seen, and which fall little short of the fine releifs of the Greeks and Romans. This by the capitals, which is the head of Isis, I concluded to be dedicated to that Goddess. And such a Temple Strabo mentions after Tentyra, which from the name I concluded to be about Dendyra. There are two or three other small Temples near this, and three very magnificent gates. Opposite to this on the East side is Kena, which I suppose is the ancient Chenobascium.

At Kepht somewhat higher are signs of a very large city, but no ruins from which one may pass a judgment what the buildings were, except a small Temple and two bridges over the old canal. This was the antient Coptos, to which the merchandise of the East was brought by land from the Red sea, which is as they told me four days journey off. A trade was carried on in later times, but the Arabians have entirely put a stop to it by their robberys. The people find much of the refuse of Emeralds, probably thrown away by the Artists, and which were dug between this city and the Red sea. It is a stone not transparent, as the common Emerald, and yet is much valued. It is from this place that the Christians of the countrey [sic] were in derision called by the Turks Cophtis, as probably this city adhered firm to the faith, rather than from a concourse of Christians to the Grotto in the mountains which are not very near, and upon enquiry I could not find that there are any Grotts in these mountains.

Not much higher is Chous the old Vicus Apollinis where I saw the ruin of a small Temple dedicated to Apollo, and a Greek inscription on it mentioning its being dedicated to the Deity by King Ptolemy, Queen Cleopatra and their children. Higher up at Carnack, which was the East side of the famous city of Thebes I saw most magnificent ruins of the Temple of Jupiter of Thebes, the ruins extend for half a mile in length, and not much less in breadth, and are very perfect. Among them are six or seven grand gate ways, allmost entire. One of which is built of red Granite, and all the buildings inside and out, and also the columns are adorned with Hieroglyphicks, many of which were defaced; which was doubtless done in the time of Cambyses, the Persians being enemys to such representations. A consideration that raised in me sentiments of veneration for such noble peices of antiquity, which were defaced between two, and three thousand years ago, remains hardly to be equalled in point of antiquity, and only to be exceeded by those on the other side, where doubtless was the greater part of the city of Thebes; and when the city decayed being no longer the residence of the Kings it was

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inhabited only in villages, a town being built on the East side probably on account of the Temple of Jupiter, and this town was called for that reason Deopolis. An advanced ground on the West (North of a fine plain) extending to the hills both to the North, and also to the West from the river, is all cut out into Grottos. Up the sides and under the very hills themselves are most extraordinary works cut in the rock. These works below cut as on each side of so many streets, made me enclined to think that Thebes might be a city under ground; the dryness of the climate, and no ruins appearing over these works confirming me in that opinion. The works under the hills may be justly reckoned amongst the wonders of the world. They are several rooms like gallerys one within another cut out of the solid rock, and are from thirty to fifty feet long, about ten wide, and seventeen high. Every part of these is cut in most beautifull Hieroglyphicks of men, birds, and beasts, all finely painted, and the ceiling represents the firmament, and is cut in stars and painted likewise. At the end of each of these strings of gallerys is the large sarcophagus of some one King all cut out of one piece of red Granite. The way to some of them is between the hills, and there appears to be a grand entrance from the city under the hills, which probably had a communication with those between the hills, and in some that I was in were deep square holes, down by which I saw doors below, that lead to other apartments. Strabo saw these works and says they were about forty wonderfully cutt, and well worth seeing as indeed they are. I was in eleven of them, and saw the entrances to several others stopped up. I looked diligently for the Obelisks mentioned by Strabo on which there were inscriptions giving an account of the great riches and conquests of the Knigs of Thebes, but I could see no sign of them. Near the hills are great ruins of a Temple, and several Colossal statues are standing in it; and at the entrance are the ruins of one which seems to have been of one peice of red Granite. I took several measures of the parts of it, one of which may give your Lordship an Idea of the enormous size of it, from the top of the head to the bottom of the neck measured eleven feet; but to lessen the wonder of this statue I must tell your Lordship that I have reason to think it was sitting.

About half a mile South West of this Temple are two sitting Colossal statues. I have several measures of the parts of them, but they are not now by me, but they seem to be little inferior to the other. One of them is entire, and of one stone, the other being broke (as Strabo says it was reported) by an Earthquake, is now built up from the middle with large stones, which are of an extraordinary spangling kind. The broken one was the statue of Memnon [see Plates 2 & 3], and it was said that every day about the first hour a certain noise was heard to come from it, and the people have the tradition of it, and say it sounds now, but no body ever heard it, that I could meet with, but I copies from the statue several Epigrams, and a great number of testimonys of great persons in Greek and Latin that they had heard the sound some of them more than once. Strabo indeed was there, and heard the sound but did not think it came from the statue. Further on are the ruins of three, or four statues that seemed to be of the same size, and near the mountain some remains of the Temple I suppose they lead to, and the foot of the hill is cut away to make a regular Area for it.

I am my Lord

DAMIATA [DAMIETTA] IN EGYPT
8/19 March, 1738
Pococke to Bishop Milles
Letter 6

My Lord,

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In my last letter I did myself the honour to write to your Lordship, I gave you some general account of my journey to the famous city of Thebes, and of the ruins, and wonderful underground works of that city. Above it, on the East, at a place called Luxeran, are the remains of a very grand Temple, not less than a quarter of a mile long. At the entrance area two of the most perfect and beautiful Obelisks I ever saw; the red Granite being of the best sort, not scaled, and having the polish on it. There is an inner, secret room, on which much art is bestowed in Hieroglyphicks; probably some mysteries were performed in it; and seeing many Hawks cut in it, I concluded that a sacred Hawk was kept here, under which shape Orus, or Apollo was worshipped, and that this was the city of the Hawk, mentioned by ancient authors.

At Erment, the old Hermonthus, I concluded for the same reason that I saw the room in a Temple, in which the sacred Bull was kept, mentioned likewise by the ancients to be kept there. I saw here likewise the ruins of a Christian Church, but so imperfect, that it was with much difficulty I made out the plan of it, which is one of the most beautiful I ever saw; being adorned within, with four rooms of fine slender pillars of red Granite. The plan [see Plate 4, E] pleased me so well and I believe would hit your Lordship's taste so exactly, that I wish I could see your Lordship bring it as it were out of its ruins, by putting it in execution.

At Esne, the ancient Latapolis, is a temple entire. I looked among the Hieroglyphicks for the Latus fish, they worshipped, and should have thought by my not finding it, if I had been deceived in the place, if the Itineraries had not fixed it; for they have made the Latus so much like the Crocodile, that the people shewed it to me for the Crocodile, though this large fish is like other fish, and goes now by the same name in upper Egypt, though it has another in lower Egypt.

About four miles North of Esne, is a Temple which from the Hieroglyphicks I concluded was dedicated to Lucina, and that in this spot was the city of that Goddess. A mile South of Esne is the convent of Martyrs so famous in the primitive times, among the Egyptians, and from whose martyrdom they reckoned theirs. There are no marks of her devotion there now, nor of the ancient regard paid to it except a great number of tombs in a very large cemetery [sic], that here may be called magnificent, and which are built something like the Holy Sepulcher. One sees on tombstones the Eagles cut, and this motto which probably the Empress gave to the monastery ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ Ο ΒΟΗΘΟΣ.

This is one of the seven monasteries where the Priests cannot marry, but they live here with their whole generations men and women. Higher up the state of Christianity is very miserable; this being the last church to the South.

At Elfou the ancient Apollinopolis are the ruins of a very grand Temple. Higher up is a strait of the Nile between two rocks. They have a tradition, that a chain was stretched across there, and shew the very niche in the rock where they say it was fixed. On the other side are some works cut in the rock and adorned with Hieroglyphicks, which seem to have been places of Pagan worship.

Above this I saw a small ruin of the city of Ombo and of a Temple on a small hill, [see Plate 6] which is now called Com Ombo, or the hill of Ombo. I saw on the Islands near it no less than twenty great Crocodiles together, which are probably the places, where the citizens of Ombo took so much care of them, and waged war in defence of their Gods. If the same superstition had continued, I should not have dared to have shot at them as I did, and I should have been in more danger from the religious people of Ombo, than I was in with regard to the Arabs.

At Assouan I was under the tropic. Here was the old Sene, where they had a well made to prove that they were under the Tropic which at noon of the Solstice day was all over illuminated, and cast no shadow. I will not say that I found out a fabric that was probably built over that well, or was made to

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try some experiment of that nature, or in some part of Astronomy, but hereafter shall beg your Lordships opinion on that subject. There is very little to be seen of old Siene among the ruins of the old town of Assouan, which was built of unburnt brick on rocks of red Granite. For here all the country to the East, the bed of the Nile, the Islands in it, and those rocks which make the Cataracts are all of Granite, mostly of the red sort, and I saw the Quarries both in the country, and in the Islands; and the places whence great columns were hewn out, and some marked out, and left in the Quarry; and in all parts the marks of the chisels; some of the Quarries being cut out in two or three steps are an instance of the ignorance of the people of this country, who say they are ruined Pyramids, and Paul Lucas, who delivers most things by hearsay, places Pyramids here in his map, which is as false as can be, in relation for upper Egypt.

Opposite to Assouan is the Isle on which stood the city of Elephantine, where I saw the remains of a Temple, [see Plate 5] and of a beautifull gate of red Granite. But it would be no recommendation to the art bestowed on the releifs of this Gate, in this place, to say they exceed the value of the materials, where there are no other stones, I looked in vain for the well cutt in the rock, by which they observed how the Nile rose. South of this city are several small Islands of high rocks of red Granite, of the best sort, which I saw had been worked for Quarries, and it is probable that out of one of these was hewn that wonderfull house of one stone, which Herodotus says was three years in carrying from Elephantine to Sais in Delta. This house according to his account was twenty one cubits long fourteen broad & eight high. I drank of the water of the Nile on the West side, that I might be sure according to the answer of the Oracle, and by account of the antient Geographers that I was in the old Ethiopia. I went a mile along a valley to the West, opposite to the South part of Elephantine, which probably was the bounds between Egypt and Ethiopia; and if it was so I view'd the ruins of a monastery in Ethiopia on the South side of that valley.

Your Lordship may be sure I saw the Cataracts, which are but three miles higher. They are not to be described, and my curiosity was not satisfied till I went three or four miles above them farther South to the small Isle in which stood the city of Philae, inhabited both by Ethiopians and Egyptians. The whole Isle seems to have been walled round rising high above the water and where the walls make angles they appear something like a modern fortification. The Temple here [see Plate 6] is exceedingly grand and allmost entire. In it was worshipped the Ethiopian Hawk, and I have reason to think that I saw the very room where he was kept, and a small enclosure in it which was the proper apartment of this Deified animal. Besides several rooms at the end of the Temple there are three Areas, one of which has a Portico on each side of ten pillars, another of near forty, and ruins of two Granite Obelisks; this Area goes to the end of the Island, where it is at least thirty feet above the water, and faces a long reach of the Nile, which is terminated by the hills of Granite, and alltogether affords a very beautifull, and Romantick view. Strabo who went to this Isle seems to have been a very superficial observer of natural curiositys. He speaks of large black stones, laid one upon another, in the way, which are all red Granite, and have indeed a brown cast, many of them being exposed to the weather: but it is very surprising that he should make no mention of these famous quarries out of which the Obelisks were cut, which were esteemed such great masterpieces of art in their kind, that they were afterwards carried to Rome with the utmost expence. He speaks also of going thro' a plain country to it, though a rougher face of nature can hardly appear, as on each side there is nothing to be seen but hills and rocks. It is true that it is a fine plain road, the crumbling of the Granite mixed with the sand, makes it like a gravel walk, and the authors words may perhaps be favourably interpreted as spoken only of the road, it we suppose $\pi\epsilon\delta\iota\omicron\nu$ is an error for $\pi\epsilon\delta\omicron\nu$. In January I saw the corn here in ear, and some fruits ripe, and found the sun as hot in the afternoon as it is with us in May, for I was here in the degree of Latitute 23.24 and being South of the Tropic was in the Torrid Zone.

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I returned to Cairo having performed this voyage in the three months time with the greatest good fortune in every respect.

Your Lordship may wonder that I say nothing of inscriptions, but I am very well assured that there are not ten in all Egypt, none older than the Ptolemy a few of the Romans, and all in Greek. There are indeed some which are certainly Hieroglyphical inscriptions, which before the government of the Greeks were allways used about their Temples; but I beleive it would puzzle the best Decypherer in the secretarys office to interpret them and would not be so profitable, as finding out a plot.

I shall not repeat to your Lordship, what has been observed by every traveller. All the great works, especially about Cairo, are attributed by the vulgar to the Patriarch Joseph, whereas Memphis was rather lower on the other side of the river, and it is supposed that the Pharoahs at that time resided at Tanis. But they say that the rise of this tradition is owing to a Sultan Joseph being promoter of most of these great works, who I beleive was Sultan Selim, who had also the name of Job or Joseph, and was the founder of that family of Sultans, which is commonly distinguished by the name of Jobile from him.

Coming to this place in order to embark for Joppa to be at Jerusalem this Easter, I saw on the East about twenty miles below the division of the Nile at a village called Benalhassar, great marks of an old city, laid out in a very different manner from any other Egyptian citys I had seen, which I beleive was the city of Onia; which Onias a Priest of the Jews in Egypt obtained of a King of Egypt, and built a Temple in it, and this city Ptolemy makes the capital of the Nomos of Heliopolis, which it probably was after the decay of Heliopolis.

I could not find out the city of Bubastis which was lower down and is judged to be the Pi-beses in Ezekiel mentioned by God Almighty in denouncing his judgments against Egypt.

I passed near Manoura near which the Christian forces of the Holy war were twice defeated. In the first action the Earl of Artois was drown'd, and the brave Earl of Salisbury died fighting on his knees, and the whole army that was in this action was cut to pieces. The French engaging afterwards with Good King Lewis at their head had not better fortune: the King being taken prisoner, and Damiatia among other things was given for his ransom. Mansoura seems to agree with the situation of Pacusa from which place the canal was cut from the Nile to Arsinoe, on the Red sea, a voyage of four days sailing, and if so the water mentioned in the actions between the Christians and Turks is probably the remains of that canal which was begun by Necus King of Egypt, carried on by Darius, and perfected by one of the Ptolemys, being called the Canal of the Kings.

Though some are of a contrary opinion, yet I cannot but think that Damiatia is the old Pelusium, which is thought to be the Sin [?] mentioned in Holy writ, Magdolum was twelve miles from it, according to the Itinerary mentioned also in the prophets, and famous for the victory gained there over the Syrians by Necus King of Egypt.

I have a piece of news to inform your Lordship of, which is somewhat curious. A few days before I came to Cairo, a certain Count, and his Lady and a missionary from Rome set out for upper Egypt. The Count I am here informed is certainly King Theodore; he had (they say) engaged the Pope to send him with the Mission into Ethiopia; they went five days above the Cataracts where they narrowly escaped, and were obliged to return praecipitately [sic], and so made hast[e] to Cairo. I parted from one place the moment they came to it, not knowing of it. They proposed to have gone to Ethiopia by a branch of the Nile, or rather by a river falling into it that rises to the South East called Asara, and if this did not succeed to go into Ethiopia by way of the Red sea, but it is said now that

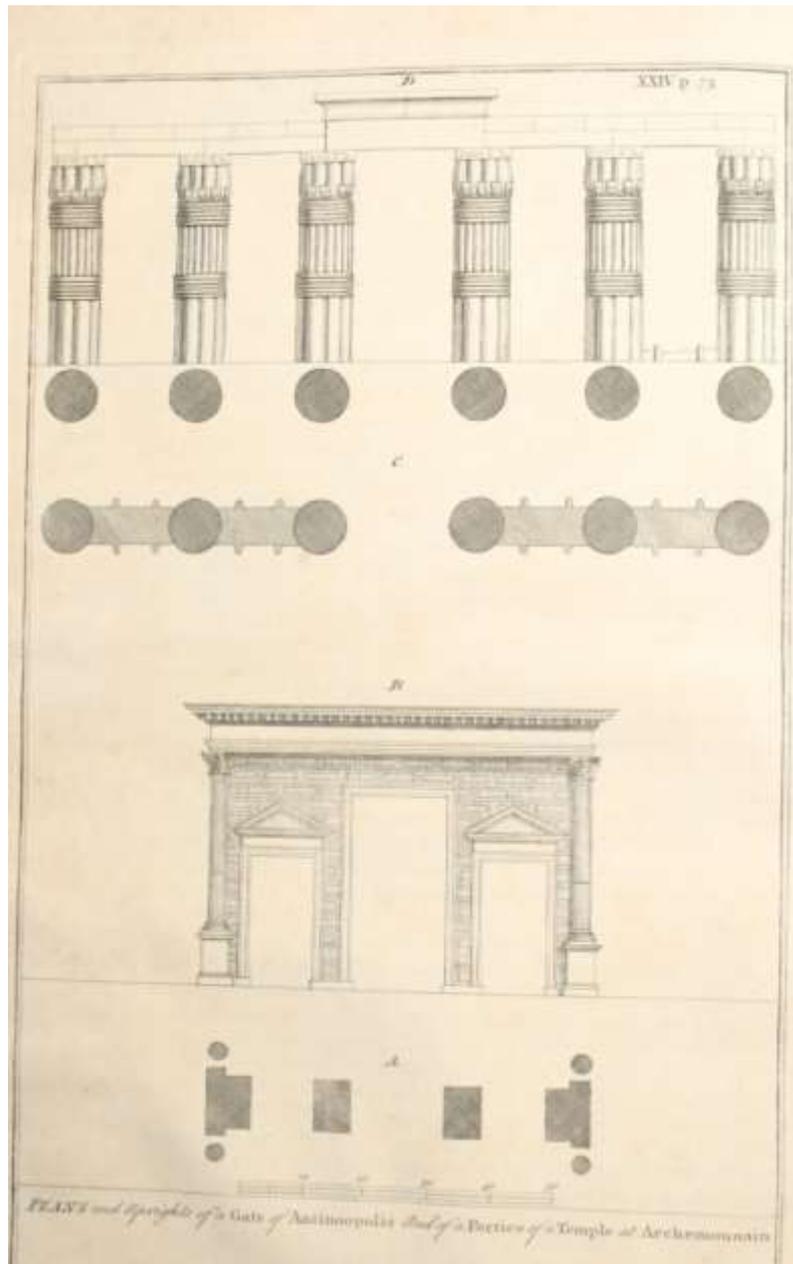
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they are returning into Europe. When I left Leghorn it was said he was incognito aboard a Dutch ship, having been at Rome, and no one knew where he was, tho' he had embarked at Leghorn.

I am exceeding glad to hear of your Lordships better health, and when your Lordship has got rid of this gravel [gallstones] I hope (by abstaining from whatever might cause it) your Lordship will enjoy a second spring of health, and that we shall live to have a happy meeting.¹⁵

I beg leave to put in my kind remembrances to my fellow traveller [Jeremiah Milles] and am

My Lord



¹⁵Bishop Milles died on 13 May, 1740, a year before Pococke's return to the West.

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Plate 1: R. Pococke, *A Description of the East & some other Countries*, Volume 1, Plans and Uprights of a Gate of Antinoopolis and of a Portico of a Temple of Archemounain (Plate XXIV)



Plate 2: R. Pococke, *A Description of the East & some other Countries*, Volume 1, The Statue of Memnon at Thebes (Plate XXVI)

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Plate 3: R. Pococke, *A Description of the East & some other Countries*, Volume 1,
The Statue of Memnon at Thebes (Plate XXVII)

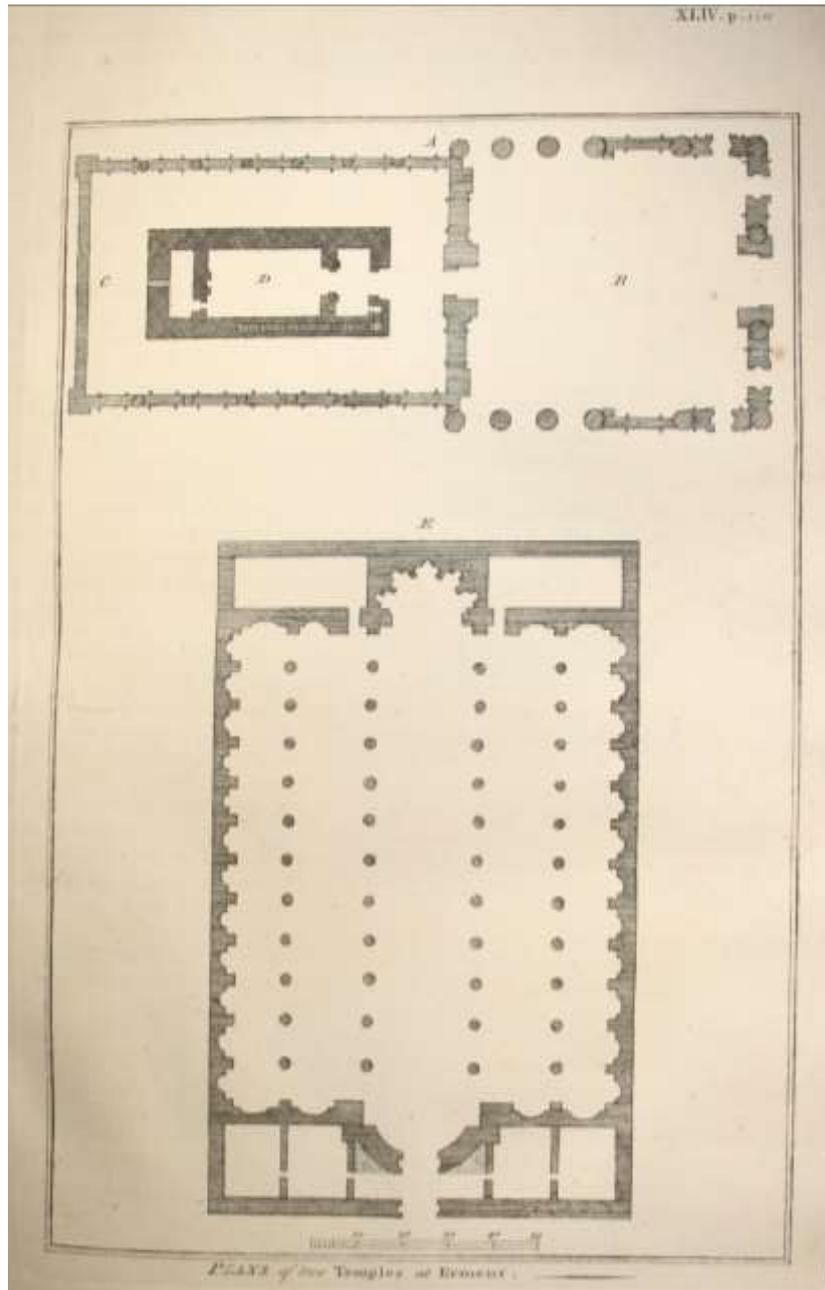


Plate 4: R. Pococke, *A Description of the East & some other Countries*, Volume 1,
Plans of two Temples at Erment (Plate XLIV)

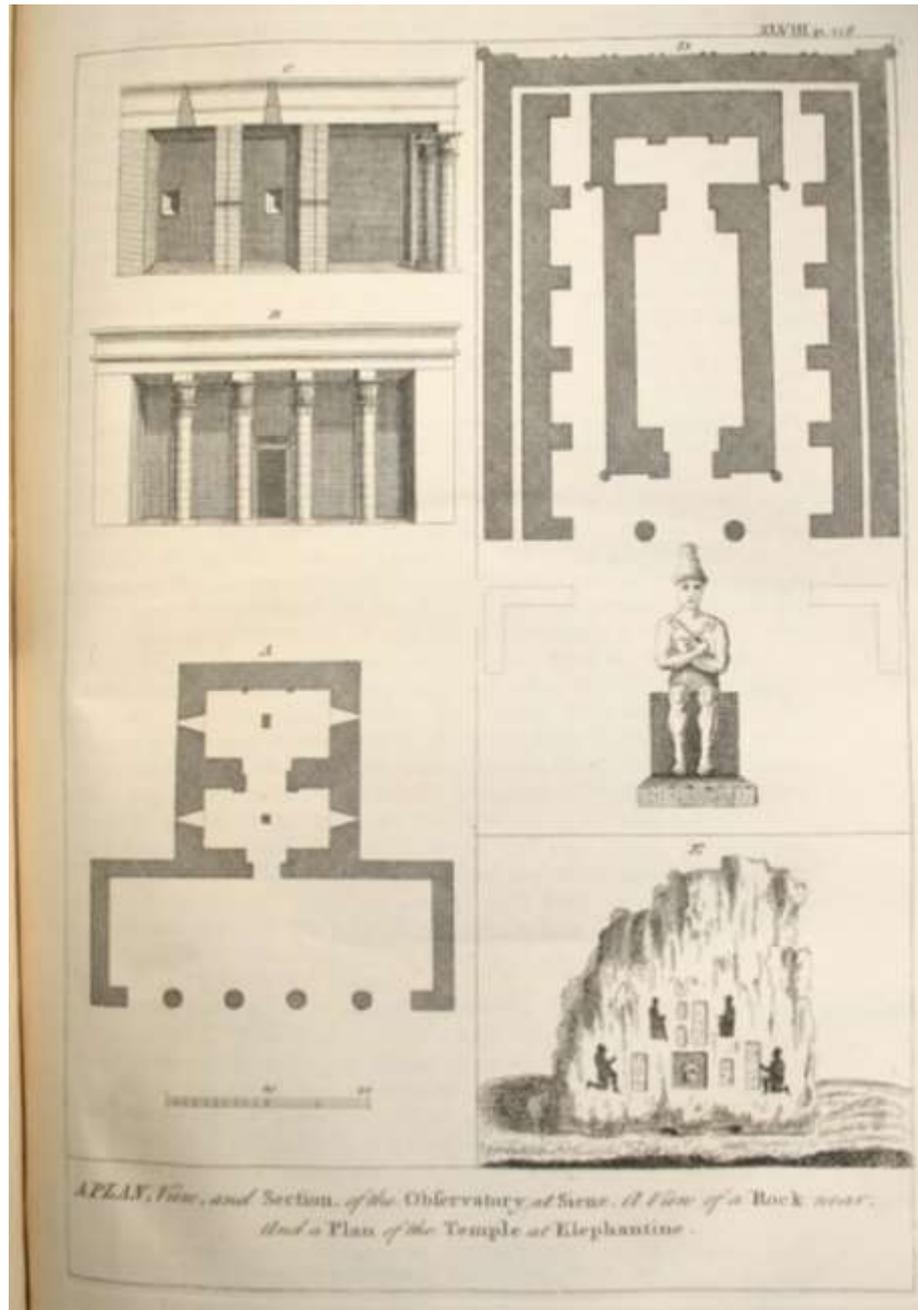


PLATE XLVIII. A PLAN, FINE, and SECTION. of the Observatory at Siene. A View of a Rock near. And a Plan of the Temple at Elephantine.

Plate 5: R. Pococke, *A Description of the East & some other Countries*, Volume 1, ... and a Plan of the Temple at Elephantine (Plate XLVIII)

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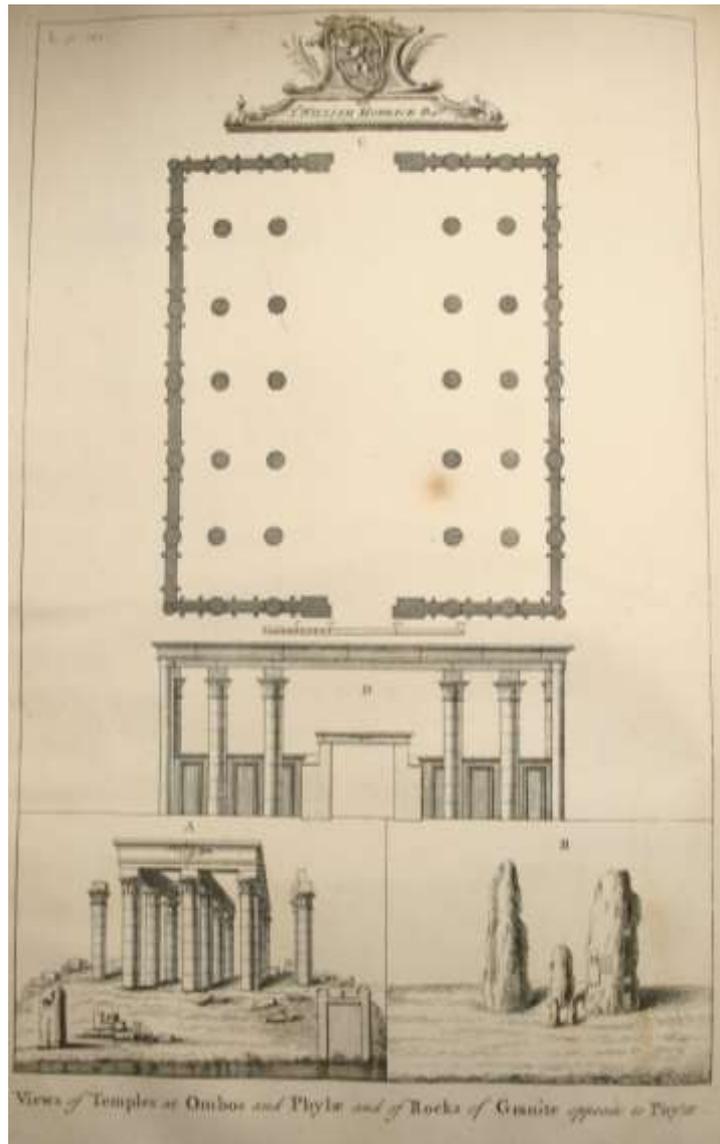


Plate 6: R. Pococke, *A Description of the East & some other Countries*, Volume 1,
Views of Temples at Ombos and Phylae and of Rocks of Granite opposite to Phylae (Plate L)