

§. VIII.

Notes of principall things in John Leo his eight
 Booke of the Historie of Africa.

THe most noble and famous Province of Egypt [II. vi. 832.]
 bordering Westward upon the Desarts of Barca,
 Numidia, and Libya; Eastward upon the Desarts
 lying betweene Egypt it selfe and the Red Sea; and
 Northward upon the Mediterran Sea; is inclosed South-
 ward with the Land of the foresaid people called Bugiha,
 and with the River of Nilus. It stretcheth in length from
 the Mediterran Sea to the Land of the people called
 Bugiha, about foure hundred and fiftie miles: but in
 breadth it is very narrow; so that it contayneth nought but
 a small distance betweene both the bankes of Nilus, and
 the barren Mountaynes bordering upon the foresaid
 Desarts, being inhabited onely in that place where Nilus
 is separate from the said Mountaynes: albeit, towards the
 Mediterran Sea it extendeth it selfe somewhat broader.
 For Nilus about fourescore miles from the great Citie of
 Cairo is divided into two branches, one whereof running
 in his Chanell Westward, returneth at length into the
 mayne streame from whence hee tooke his originall, and
 having passed about threescore miles beyond Cairo, it
 divideth it selfe into two other branches, whereof the one
 runneth to Damiata, and the other to Rosetto. And out
 of that which trendeth to Damiata issueth another branch,
 which discharging it selfe into a Lake, passeth through a
 certaine gullet or strait into the Mediterran Sea, upon
 the banke whereof standeth the most ancient Citie of

*Egypt foure
 hundred and
 fiftie miles
 long.*

*The Course of
 Nilus.*

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Samuel Purchas

Excerpt

[More information](#)A.D.
c. 1526.

PURCHAS HIS PILGRIMES

Turbant.

Tenese: and this division of Nilus into so many streames and branches causeth Egypt (as I have beforesaid) to bee so narrow. All this Province is plaine, and is most fruitfull for all kind of Graine and Pulse. There are most pleasant and greene Medowes, and great store of Geese and other Fowles. The Countrey people are of a swart and browne colour: but the Citizens are white. Garments they weare which are strait downe to their wastes, and broad beneath, and the sleeves likewise are strait. They cover their heads with a round and high habit, called by the Italians a Dulipan. Their shooes are made according to the ancient fashion. In Summer they weare Garments of parti-coloured Cotton: but in Winter they use a certayne Garment lined with Cotton, which they call Chebre: but the chiefe Citizens and Merchants are apparelled in cloth of Europe. The Inhabitants are of an honest, cheerefull, and liberall disposition. For their victuals they use a kind of new and extreme salt Cheeses, and sowre Milke also artificially congealed: which fare albeit they account very daintie, yet cannot strangers digest it, and into every Dish almost they put sowre Milke.

*A division of
Egypt.*

Since the Mahumetans were Lords of Egypt, it hath beene divided into three parts. For the Region from Cairo to Rosetto is called the shoare of Errif: and from Cairo to the Land of Bugiha, it is called Sahid, that is to say, The firme Land: but the Region adjoyning upon that branch of Nilus, which runneth towards Damiata and Tenese, they call by the name of Bechria or Maremma. All Egypt is exceeding fertile: but the Province of Sahid excelleth the two other parts for abundance of Corne, Cattle, Fowles and Flaxe: and Maremma aboundeth with Cotton and Sugar. Howbeit, the Inhabitants of Maremma, and Errif are farre more civill then the people of Sahid: because those two Provinces lye neerer unto the Sea, and are more frquented by European, Barbarian, and Assyrian Merchants: but the people of Sahid have no conversation with strangers, except it be with a few Æthiopians.

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JOHN LEO ON AFRICA

A.D.

c. 1526.

*The ancient Pedigree and Originall of the Egyptians. Gen. 10. 6.***Mesraim is recorded to be the Brother of Chus, and the Sonne of Cham Chibith.*

The Egyptians (as Moses writeth) fetch their originall from *Mesraim the Sonne of Chus, the Sonne of Cham, the Sonne of Noe; and the Hebrewes call both the Countrey and the Inhabitants of Egypt by the name of Mesraim. The Arabians call Egypt it selfe Mesre, but the Inhabitants Chibith. And Chibith (they say) was the man, that first tooke upon him the Government of this Region, and beganne first to build houses thereon. Also the Inhabitants call themselves by the same name: neither are there left any true Egyptians, besides a few Christians, which are at this present remayning. The residue embracing the Mahumetan Religion, have mingled themselves amongst the Arabians and the Moores. This Kingdome was governed many yeares by the Egyptians themselves, as namely, by the Kings that were called Pharaos, (who by their Monuments and admirable Buildings, seeme to have beene mightie Princes) and also by the Kings called Ptolomæi. Afterward, being subdued unto the Romane Empire, this Kingdome since the comming of Christ was converted unto the Christian Religion, under the said Romane Government: since the decay of which Empire, it fell into the possession of the Emperours of Constantinople; who being very carefull to maintayne this Kingdome, were at length deprived thereof by the Mahumetans, under the conduct of Hamrus the Sonne of Hasi, being appointed Captaine Generall over the Arabian Armie of Homar, the second Califa or Mahumetan Patriarke of that name: who permitting all men to have their owne Religion, required nought but Tribute at their hands. The said Captaine built upon the banke of Nilus, a certaine Towne called by the Arabians Fustato, which word signifieth in their Language a Tabernacle: for when he first undertooke this Expedition, he marched through wild and desart places void of Inhabitants, so that his Armie was constrained to lye in Tents. The common people call this Towne Mesre Hatichi, that is to say, the ancient Citie; in comparison of which Cairo may not unfitly be called the New Citie.

Fustato.

A.D.
 c. 1526.

PURCHAS HIS PILGRIMES

[II. vi. 833.]

Neither Cairo nor any place neere unto it, can by any likelihood challenge that they were at any time inhabited by the ancient Pharaos. But heere it is to be noted, that the Nobilitie of the ancient Egyptians dwelt in times past in the Region of Sahid beyond Cairo, in the Cities of Fium, of Manfichmin, and in other such famous Cities. Howbeit, after Egypt was conquered by the Romanes, the Egyptian Nobilitie planted themselves in the Region of Errif, upon the Sea shoare thereof, namely, about the Cities of Alexandria, Rosetto, and other famous Townes retayning as yet the Latine names. Also when the Romane Empire was translated into Greece, the said Nobilitie still inhabited upon the Sea shoare, the Emperours Lieutenant residing at Alexandria: but after the Mahumetans got the Dominion of Egypt, the foresaid Nobilitie retyred themselves into the in-land, hoping thereby to reape a double commoditie: namely, first, in that they might bee a meanes to pacifie the Kingdome on both sides of them; and secondly, that they might bee free from the invasions of the Christians, whereof they should have beene in danger, had they remayned any longer upon the Sea Coast.

*The qualitie
 & tempera-
 ture of the
 Ayre in Egypt.
 Raine unwhol-
 some.*

The Ayre of this Countrey is hot and unwholesome: and it rayneth heere very seldome or never. And Raine is the cause of many Diseases in Egypt: for in raynie weather some of the Egyptians are subject unto dangerous Rheumes, and Fevers; and others unto a strange kinde of swelling in their privy Members: which swelling the Physicians impute unto Salt Cheese and Beefe, which are the common Dyet of the Egyptians. In Sommer time this Countrey is most extremely hot, for a remedie of which heat they build in every Towne certaine high Towres, having one doore aloft, another beneath, right over against the houses, through the tops whereof the wind passing down-ward, doth somewhat coole and refresh the Ayre: otherwise in regard of the intolerable heat of the Sunne it were impossible for any man to live there. Sometime the Pestilence is so hot among them, especially

*Extream
 Pestilence.*

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JOHN LEO ON AFRICA

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c. 1526.

at Cairo, that sometimes there dye twelve thousand persons thereof on a day. But with the French Poxe, I thinke, that no other Countrey under Heaven is so molested, nor that contayneth so many people infected therewith. About the beginning of Aprill, they reape their Corne, and having reaped it, they presently thrash the same; neyther shall you see one eate of their Corne standing till the twentieth of May.

*The French
Maladie most
rife in Egypt.*

The inundation or overflow of Nilus beginneth about the middest of June, increasing afterward for the space of fortie dayes, and for the space of other fortie dayes also decreasing: during which time all the Cities and Townes of Egypt are like unto Ilands, which none can come unto but by Boats and Barges. At this time also Nilus is very fit to be sailed upon with vessels of burthen; some whereof are so bigge that they will contayne sixe or seven thousand bushels *of Corne: and some hundreds of Cattell together: and in these Vessels they sayle onely downe the streame: for against the streame or without the overflowing time they would scarsly passe emptie. The Egyptians according to the increase of Nilus, doe foresee the plentie or dearth of the yeere following: as wee will more at large declare, when wee come to speake of the Iland of Nilus over against the olde Citie, where the inundation of Nilus is measured. Neither is it our purpose in this place particularly to describe all the Cities of Egypt, because our African Writers are of divers opinions thereabout; for some would have Egypt to bee a part of Africa, but others are of a contrary minde. Divers there are that affirme, that part of Egypt adjoyning upon the Desarts of Barbarie, Numidia and Libya, to belong unto Africa. Some others ascribe unto Africa all those places that border upon the principall and mayne Channell of Nilus: but as for other places, as namely, Manf, Fium, Semenud, Damanhore, Berelles, Tenesse, and Damiata, they thinke them not to be situate in Africa: which opinion, I my selfe, also upon many and great reasons take to be true. Wherefore my purpose is to

*The increase of
Nilus.*

**Moggia.*

A.D.
 c. 1526.

PURCHAS HIS PILGRIMES

*The Citie of
 Bosiri.*

describe none other Cities but such as stand neere the
 mayne and principall Channell of Nilus.

The ancient Citie of Bosiri built by the Egyptians upon
 the Mediterran Sea, and standing twentie miles Westward
 from Alexandria, was in times past environed with most
 strong wals, and adorned with most beautifull and stately
 Buildings. At this present, it is compassed with many
 possessions or grounds bearing Dates, whereof no man
 taketh charge nor reapeth any commoditie: for when
 Alexandria was wonne by the Christians, the Inhabitants
 abandoned this Citie, and fled towards the Lake called
 Buchaira.

*The great
 Citie of
 Alexandria in
 Egypt.*

The great Citie of Alexandria in Egypt, founded by
 Alexander the Great, not without the advise of most
 famous and skilfull Architects, upon a beautifull point of
 Land stretching into the Mediterran Sea, and being distant
 fortie miles Westward of Nilus, was in times past, till it
 grew subject unto the Mahumetans, most sumptuously
 and strongly built, as divers and sundry Authors beare
 record. Afterward this Citie decaying, many yeares
 together, was deprived of the ancient renowne and honour,
 and remayned in manner desolate, because no Merchants
 of Greece nor of any other part of Europe exercised any
 longer Traffique therein. Howbeit, a certaine craftie
 Mahumetan Patriarke made the rude people beleewe, that
 by the Prophetie of Mahumet, most ample Indulgences
 were granted unto all such as would inhabit the Citie or
 guard it for certaine dayes, and would bestow some Almes
 for a publike benefit: by which wily stratageme the Citie
 was in short time filled with forraine people, which from
 all places resorted thereunto: by whom were built many
 houses neere unto the Citie wals, and many Colledges of
 Students, and divers Monasteries for the reliefe of
 Pilgrims.

*Indulgences of
 Mahumet.*

[II. vi. 834.] The Citie it selfe is foure square, and hath foure Gates
 to enter in at: one standing on the East side towards
 Nilus, another on the South side towards the Lake of
 Buchaira, the third Westward towards the Desart of Barca,

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and the fourth towards the Meditterran Sea and the Haven ; whereat stand the Searchers and Customers, which ransacke strangers even to their very shirts: for they demand custome, not onely for wares and Merchandize, but also some allowance in the hundred for all kinde of money. Neere unto this Citie-walles there are two other Gates also, being divided asunder by a faire walke, and a most impregnable Castle, which standeth upon the Strand or Wharfe of the Port, commonly called Marsa el Bargi, that is to say, the Port of the Castle: in which Port ride the principall and best ships, namely, such as come from Venice, Genoa, Ragusa, with other Ships of Europe. For hither resort the English, the Low Dutch, the Biscaines, the Portugals, and men of all other Nations in Europe for traffique sake. Howbeit, this Port is most usually frequented by the Ships of Appulia, Sicilia, and of Greece, which are Turkish Ships; all which resort into this Harbour to save themselves from Pyrats, and from tempestuous weather. Another Port there is also, called Marsa Essil Sela, that is to say, the Port of the Chaine, wherein the Ships of Barbary, namely, those of Tunis and of the Ile of Gerbi harbour themselves. The Christians are constrained to pay about the tenth part of all wares that they bring in and carry out, but the Mahumetans pay but the twentieth part: and whatsoever wares are carried by land to Cairo pay no custom at all. And at this present that part of the Citie which is next unto Cairo, is the most famous and best furnished with Merchandize brought by Merchants from all places of the world. The other parts of this Citie are destitute both of Civility and Inhabitants: for except one long street, and that part of the Citie next the Haven which is full of Merchants shops, and inhabited by Christians, the residue is void and desolate. Which desolation happened at that time, when Lewis the fourth, King of France, being restored to liberty by the Soldan, the King of Cyprus with a fleet, partly of Venetians, and partly of French-men suddenly assailed Alexandria, and with great slaughter surprized and sacked the same. But

*Searchers
indeed.**Ancient traf-
fique of the
English unto
Alexandria.**This in Leos
time 1526.**Alexandria
surprized and
sacked by the
king of
Cyprus.*

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the Soldan comming with an huge armie to rescue Alexandria, so discouraged the Cyprians, that they burnt downe the houses thereof, and betooke themselves to flight. Whereupon the Soldan repairing the walles, and building a Castle neere unto the Haven, the Citie grew by little and little into that estate, wherein it standeth at this present.

Pharos.

In the Citie of Alexandria there is a certaine high Mount, fashioned like unto the place called Testaccio at Rome, whereon, although it hath no naturall situation, are found divers earthen Vessels of great antiquity. Upon the

WatchTower.

top of the said Mount standeth a Turret, where a certaine officer is appointed to watch for such Ships as direct their course towards the Citie, who for every ship that he giveth notice of unto the Customers, receiveth a certain fee: but if he chanceth to fall asleepe, or to be out of the way at the arrivall of any Ship, whereof he certifieth not the Customers, he paieth double for his negligence into the Soldans Exchequer. Under each house of this Citie there

*Alexandria vaulted.**The water of Nilus brought by a sluice into Alexandria.*

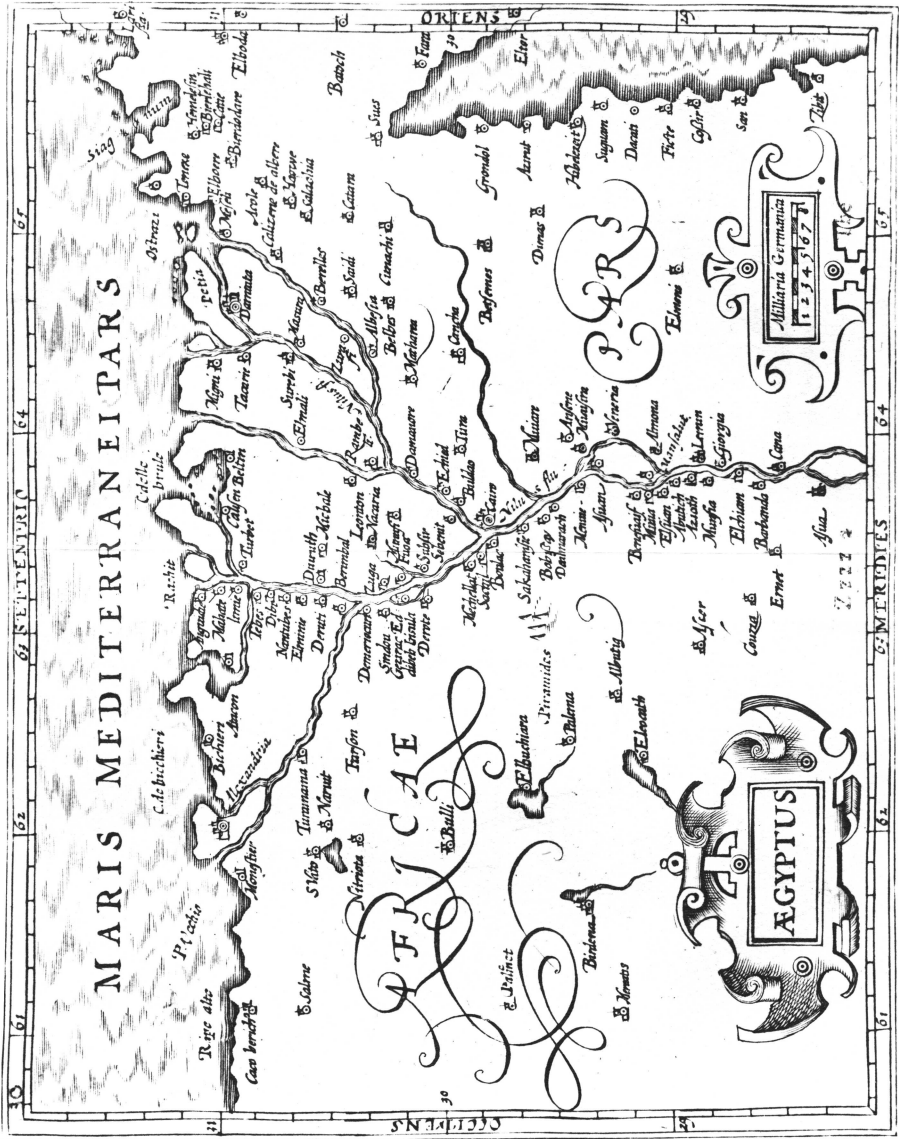
is a great vaulted Cisterne built upon mighty Pillars and Arches: whereinto the water of Nilus at every inundation is conveyed under the walles of the Citie, by a certaine wonderfull and most artificiall sluice standing without the Citie it selfe. But these Cisternes growing sometime corrupt and foule, are often in Summer the occasion of many diseases and infirmities. This Citie standeth in the midst of a sandy Desart, and is destitute of Gardens and Vines, neither is the soile round about it apt to beare Corne; so that their Corne is brought them from places forty miles distant. Howbeit, neere the foresaid sluice, whereby the water of Nilus is conveyed into the Citie,

Sickely fruits.

are certaine little Gardens, the fruits whereof being growen to ripenesse, are so unwholesome, that they breed Fevers and other noysome diseases among the Citizens. Sixe miles Westward of Alexandria, among certaine ancient buildings, standeth a pillar of a wonderfull height and thicknesse, which the Arabians call Hemadussaoar, that is to say, the pillar of trees. Of this pillar there is a Fable

The pillar and a pilld Fable thereof.

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