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COUNT STANISŁAW TARNOWSKI
IN EGYPT IN 1858 AND HIS ACCOUNT
OF THIS JOURNEY

Polish travels to the Near East, including to Egypt, have a tradition going back to the Middle Ages. They spawned a rich literature in many published accounts and reminiscences, as well as in scholarly studies.¹ Yet not all accounts and reminiscences, to say nothing of relevant correspondence, have appeared in print; many remain in manuscript awaiting interest from editors. Even those once published in book form or in magazines are by now difficult to obtain. Such important and interesting historical sources, often of considerable literary merit, could certainly add to our historical knowledge about styles of life and travel, and about past contacts of Europeans with Egypt's ancient heritage and with its inhabitants.

Among texts not so far published are the memoirs and correspondence of Stanisław Tarnowski written in connection with his journey to Spain and the Near East which he made between November 1857 and April 1858. He wrote his reminiscences soon after he returned, never, however, intending to see them published. Until the 1990's, his manuscripts were deposited in the PAU & PAN (respectively, Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and Polish Academy of Science) Library in Kraków and in the Jagiellonian Library. The writings have

¹ The state of research on the subject is presented in these published monographs: L. Zinkow, *Nad Wisłą, nad Nilem. Starożytny Egipt w piśmiennictwie polskim (do 1914 roku)* [On the Vistula, on the Nile. Ancient Egypt in Polish Writing (prior to 1914)] Kraków 2006; H. Kaczmarek, *Polacy w Egipcie do 1914 roku* [Poles in Egypt before 1914], Szczecin 2008. See also: P. Clayton, *The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt. Artists and Travellers in the Nineteenth Century*, London 1982; *Travellers in Egypt*, P. Starkey and J. Starkey (eds.), London & New York 1998, 2nd ed., 2001. The last two, unfortunately, only marginally consider Central European literature.

since been included in a family archive being steadily reconstructed by the author's great grandson Adam Tarnowski. Prior to the present author's 2008 publication of a collection of texts concerning that journey², some correspondence (several letters) was displayed at a commemorative exhibition³, published⁴ and subsequently made the subject of an archaeological commentary by Joachim Śliwa⁵. The journey itself was mentioned in the writings of Ferdynand Hoesick⁶, Jan Stanisław Bystron⁷, and Hieronim Kaczmarek⁸. With Joachim Śliwa and Hieronim Kaczmarek, only the letters were made the subject of study.

Stanisław Tarnowski (1837-1917) was a notable personality in the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy, a distinguished scholar, influential politician and publicist, professor of philology and literary critic⁹. He was born and spent his childhood in his family estate at Dzików (formerly a village just outside the county capital of Tarnobrzeg, now part of that city), which his family had held

² S. Tarnowski, *Z Dzikowa do Ziemi Świętej. Podróż do Hiszpanii, Egiptu, Ziemi Świętej, Syrii i Konstantynopola z lat 1857-1858 (Wspomnienia oraz korespondencja z matką Gabrielą z Małachowskich Tarnowską i rodzeństwem)* [From Dzików to the Holy Land. Travels to Spain, Egypt, Holy Land, Syria, and Constantinople in 1857-1858 (Memoirs and Correspondence with Mother Gabriela Tarnowska, née Małachowska, and Siblings)], edited and with introduction by G. Nieć, Kraków 2008; G. Nieć, *Stanisława Tarnowskiego podróż na Bliski Wschód* [Stanisław Tarnowski's Journey to the Near East], *ibid.*, pp. IX-XXXIII.

³ *W służbie nauki. Stanisław Tarnowski 1837-1917. Wystawa w Oddziale Archiwum PAN w Krakowie (14 listopada 1997-28 lutego 1998)* [In Service to Learning. Stanisław Tarnowski, 1837-1917. Exhibition at PAN Archive, Kraków Chapter (Nov. 14, 1997 – Feb. 28, 1998)], *Krakowski Rocznik Archiwalny*, vol. 5: 1999, pp. 228-234.

⁴ M. Płatek, *Z listów Stanisława Tarnowskiego z podróży do Ziemi Świętej* [Selected Letters by Stanisław Tarnowski from His Journey to the Holy Land] [in:] R. Majkowska (ed.), *Stanisław Tarnowski 1837-1917. Materiały z Posiedzenia Naukowego PAU w dniu 14 listopada 1997*, [Stanisław Tarnowski, 1837-1917. Materials from PAU Session of Nov. 14, 1997], Kraków 1999, pp. 51-61.

⁵ J. Śliwa, *Stanisława Tarnowskiego wyprawy do Kairu (1858) i Wilna (1878). Komentarz archeologiczny* [Stanisław Tarnowski's Expeditions to Cairo (1858) and Wilno (1878). An Archaeological Commentary], *Rocznik Biblioteki PAU i PAN w Krakowie*, R.L (2005), pp. 181-185.

⁶ J.S. Bystron, *Polacy w Ziemi Świętej, Syrii i Egipcie 1147-1914* [Poles in the Holy Land, Syria, and Egypt, 1147-1914], Kraków 1930, pp. 215-216.

⁷ F. Hoesick, *Stanisław Tarnowski. Rys życia i prac* [Stanisław Tarnowski. An Outline of His Life and Work], vol. 1, Kraków 1906, pp. 120-121.

⁸ H. Kaczmarek, *Polacy w Egipcie...*, *passim*.

⁹ A bibliography of persons and subjects about Stanisław Tarnowski is in: *Dawni pisarze polscy od początków piśmiennictwa do Młodej Polski. przewodnik biograficzny i bibliograficzny* [Old Polish Writers from the Earliest Literature to the Outset of 'Young Poland': A Biographical and Bibliographical Guide], vol. 4: S-T, Warszawa 2003, pp. 241-242. Also cf.: J. Krzyżanowski, *A history of Polish literature*, [transl. by Doris Ronowicz], Warszawa 1978, s. 443-444.



Fig. 1. Stanisław Tarnowski, Vienna 1860
(F. Hoesick, *Stanisław Tarnowski. Rys życia i prac*, vol. 1, p. 144)

since the 16th century. He was a scion of a prominent and accomplished family which produced many outstanding statesmen, military leaders, and men of culture¹⁰. His father was count Jan Bogdan Tarnowski (1805-1850), a man socially and politically active, his mother was Gabriela Tarnowska née Małachowska (1800-1862), an enlightened woman wholly devoted to their children's upbringing. An important place in the family home was held by a library built over generations (including books, old prints, manuscripts, documents) and a collection on national relics and works of art. The latter assemblage had been substantially expanded by grandparents: Jan Feliks (1777-1842) and Waleria née Stroynowska (1782-1849)¹¹. Stanisław Tarnowski attended school in Kraków and went on to read law and philosophy in Kraków and Vienna in 1854-1860. Granted his day's historical vicissitudes and his views, after the romantic years first of study, then underground involvement and participation in the 1863 national uprising, he was arrested and sentenced to 12 years in prison which he left under a pardon in 1865. Starting then, the young aristocrat proceeded to lead a mature life under a regime established by the partitioning Austrians in Galicia (such was the name given by them to the southern Polish territory incorporated into the Habsburg monarchy in the late 18th century)¹². He sat in a regional diet in Lwów and in Vienna¹³. Over time, he became a leading, active, and prominent politician, and an advocate of "positivist", peaceful instruments of struggle for national interests¹⁴. He pursued a brilliant academic career, obtaining a doctorate in 1870, followed soon after by a post-doctoral

¹⁰ See: W. Dworzaczek, *Leliwici Tarnowscy. Z dziejów możnowładztwa małopolskiego, wiek XIV-XV* [The Leliwa Tarnowskis. From the History of Little-Poland Magnates], Warszawa 1971; idem, *Hetman Jan Tarnowski. Z dziejów możnowładztwa małopolskiego* [Hetman Jan Tarnowski. From the History of Little-Poland Magnates], Warszawa 1983; idem, *Leliwici Tarnowscy od schyłku XVI wieku do czasów współczesnych* [The Leliwa Tarnowskis from the Late 16th Century to the Present], Tarnobrzeg 1996 (publ. as MS.), and ibid., M. Brzeziński, *Dalsze dzieje rodu Tarnowskich* [Further history of the Tarnowski Family].

¹¹ See: K. Grottowa, *Zbiory sztuki Jana Feliksa i Walerii Tarnowskich w Dzikowie (1803-1849)* [The Art Collection of Jan Feliks and Waleria Tarnowskis at Dzików (1803-1849)], Wrocław 1957; *Ex collectione dzikowiana. Zbiory Tarnowskich z Dzikowa. Katalog wystawy* [Ex Collectione Dzikowiana. The Tarnowskis' Collection in Dzików. Exhibition Catalog], J. Paulinek (ed.), Warszawa 2008.

¹² See: N. Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland*, vol. 2: *1795 to the present*, Oxford 1983, pp. 139-162; *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, bd. 6: *Die Habsburgermonarchie im System der internationalen Beziehungen*, Teilband 1, A. Wandruszka and P. Urbanitsch (eds), Wien 1989, pp. 425-435.

¹³ *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, bd. 7: *Verfassung und Parlamentarismus, Die regionalen Repräsentativkörperschaften*, Teilband 2, H. Rumpler and P. Urbanitsch (eds), Wien 2000, pp. 2157-2169.

¹⁴ See: R.F. Leslie et al. (eds.), *The History of Poland since 1863*, Cambridge 1980, pp. 8-26.

habilitation degree, occupying the Chair of History of Polish Literature at the Jagiellonian University from as early as 1871 until 1909. He was twice elected Rector of the University (in 1886/1887 and 1899/1900). Moreover, from 1873 he was an active member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences as Secretary of the Faculty of Philology (1878), Secretary General (1883-1890), and Chairman (1890-1917)¹⁵. He was a respected lecturer, an admired speaker, the author of many works on the history of 16th-to-19th-century Polish literature and culture.

The idea for the journey came to him in Summer 1857. Twenty-year-old Stanisław Tarnowski had just returned to Kraków from Vienna. A close acquaintance at the time was, three years his senior, a friend of his elder brother Jan Dzierżyński, Ludwik Wodzicki (1834-1894)¹⁶. In those days, the young count from Dzików “engaged in no little socializing in various salons, in travel, and in worldliness, from which pursuits he continually derived genuine pleasure”¹⁷. Tarnowski himself especially remembered “excursions [which] flourished in that year, such as to Ojców and Pieskowa Skała, but one cherished a wish to conclude the year in the Tatras. Zakopane still in its natural condition, a simple, untouched village, was then far nicer than it is now. We went everywhere everyone went”¹⁸. How the distant foreign journey came about and how it went was related in detail by the traveler himself in “Dzików Domestic Chronicle”:

[1857] There arrived in Dzików Wodzicki and Gorayski. Wodzicki had a year to spare before he would settle at Tyczyn and manage it; this year he wanted to use to travel to Spain and to the East. Speaking of those plans of his, he once remarked, “Madam, you might well send Stan with me.” He had not ever talked about it with me, nor did I ever dream about it, but this casually dropped remark caught on; my mother and Jan began to think about it. Although, natu-

¹⁵ See: S. Grodziski, *The Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences 1872-1952-2002*, Cracow 2006, pp. 32-50.

¹⁶ For more on Ludwik Wodzicki, see: S. Koźmian, *Ludwik hrabia Wodzicki z Tyczyna* [Count Ludwik Wodzicki of Tyczyn] [in:] idem, *Pisma polityczne* [Political Writings], Kraków 1903. pp. 459-559. The lives of both aristocrat friends followed a similar pattern. Both were brought up in a Polish patriotic and insurrectionist spirit. Instructed and inspired from early on by former insurrectionists and conspirators, both later joined a conspiracy, and following a failed uprising went into politics. In 1880, Wodzicki became the emperor’s governor of the Ländebank, greatly contributing to economic development of Galicia and Austro-Hungary.

¹⁷ F. Hoesick, *Stanisław Tarnowski. Rys życia i prac* [Stanisław Tarnowski. His Life and Work] vol. 1, Kraków 1906, p. 117.

¹⁸ “The youth of my father Stanisław Tarnowski according to excerpts from the ‘Dzików Chronicle’ written by him as a wedding gift to Zdzisław Tarnowski and Zofia Potocka in 1897, destroyed in a fire at Dzików in 1927.” a typescript by son Hieronim (1884-1945) preserved in the Tarnowski family archive, 1857.

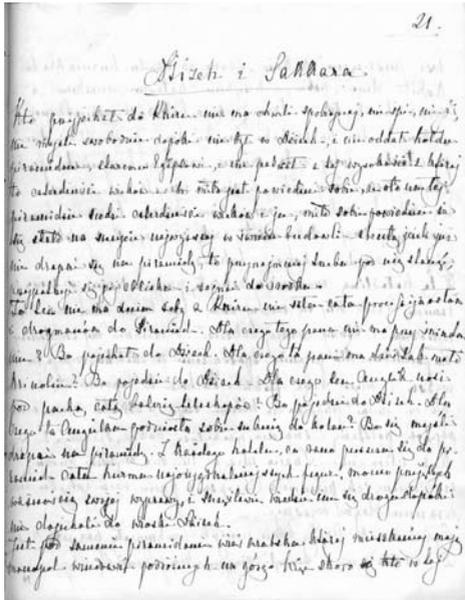


Fig. 2. Fragment of the manuscript
(Archives of the Tarnowski family)

rally enough, I took to the idea, I must do myself justice in that I was never stubborn or insistent about it. The end result was, if Stan promised to return from the voyage to the University and to study, he was free to go. Stan promised; the departure was set at autumn.

The young sons of aristocracy and wealthy gentry peregrinating to faraway lands had had a long tradition in Polish culture. It was considered part of their upbringing program. This is confirmed by many examples in the history of the Tarnowskis, for whom foreign travel was an indispensable element of the education of each new generation. In their own day, travelers had included Grand Hetman Jan Tarnowski (1488-1561), who had gone

abroad in 1517 to complete his education, additionally making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1518 and visiting Egypt. Importantly, he had written an account of his expedition, one of the first such reports in Polish writing and in the history of Polish travels to the East (for a time considered to be the very first)¹⁹. Stanisław Spytek Tarnowski (1514-1568) visited Macedonia, Greece, Arabia, Syria, and Egypt²⁰. Also Stanisław Tarnowski's immediate ancestors had done their share of traveling: his grandfather Jan Feliks Tarnowski and his wife Waleria née Stroynowska²¹, siblings who had visited Italy. Gabriela Tarnowska née

¹⁹ An account by Jan Amor Tarnowski, consisting of two parts, in Latin and in Polish: *Terminatio ex Itinerario Joannis Comititis in Tarnów, Castellani Cracoviensis, Supremi exercituum Regni Poloniae, Ducis, Venetiis ad terram Sanctam it proficisemtis* and *Opisanie tego, co w tamtych krajach i miejscach widzieć i latwo pojąć pielgrzymowi* [A Description of What a Pilgrim May See and Conceive in Those Lands and Places] remained for more than four centuries in manuscript at the Czartoryski Library in Kraków ("Teki Naruszewicza", No. 33) and was published in part by Kazimierz Hartleb in 1930. (Idem, *Najstarszy dziennik podróży do Ziemi Świętej i Syrii Jana Tarnowskiego* [The Earliest Journal of Travel to the Holy Land and Syria by Jan Tarnowski], *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 44 [1930], pp. 50-56).

²⁰ H. Kaczmarek, *Polacy w Egipcie...*, p. 107.

²¹ Their travels in Europe involved the couple's passion for collecting, with their purchases added to Dzików's collection. See: K. Grottowa, *Zbiory sztuki...*, passim. Waleria Tarnowska née Stroynowska left her diaries written in French titled *Mon journal*, of which only excerpts saw print. Her entire manuscript is kept in the Jagiellonian Library as a deposit of the Tarnowski Family (Przyb. 114/52). See: M. Braud, *Le voyage en France de la comtesse Tarnows-*

Małachowska attached especial importance to educating her children, including by travel, even despite their financial difficulty at the time of the serious economic crisis of 1857-1858. In an early letter she said, "I miss you, a yet I feel that, God willing, and with your abilities, this journey will benefit you greatly in broadening your thought and heart." In the same missive she encouraged her son to compose and send to Kraków's *Czas* daily a report, although he did not act on this advice (p. 376). She, too, on his return, ensured that he committed his experiences to paper. In another letter, she included a reflection about all her children as she wrote, "Happy, truly happy am I, as a Mother, that God in His goodness gave me kind, gracious, pious, and robust children. Happy me in that He allowed me to endow their entire lives with memories they gathered in lands which preoccupied their youthful imagination" (pp. 379-378).

Letters his mother and siblings sent to Stanisław Tarnowski as he traveled, with postscripts and greetings from other members of the household and friends, suggest that his adventures were attentively followed and commented on back home. One letter, the seventh, is available in a copy made by the mother, for they kept circulating among his nearest, read and reread. What is more, family members required separate accounts composed specifically for themselves (p. 383). Apart from letters from and to mother, the volume includes correspondence with siblings preserved in the home: Waleria (1830-1914), whose husband from 1855 was the Greater-Poland landowner Franciszek Mycielski (1832-1901), Karolina (1832-1888), who married Jan Józef Tarnowski (1826-1898) in 1853, her father's cousin, and brothers: Jan Dzierżyśław (1835-1894) and the youngest Juliusz (1840-1863), who was killed a few years later in an insurrection. Those were letters and annotations. Besides, the family archive contains a letter by Władysław Jabłonowski, Stanisław's school-time friend. Letters written by Tarnowski's companion in the expedition are also extant²². The correspondence which was published jointly with the *Memoirs* makes for a meaningful complement, especially for the early stage in the journey, which was as interesting as its later stages. Many thoughts and events touched live upon in Stanisław Tarnowski's letters were not elaborated upon in the *Memoirs*. Making a written record as his mother wished, he began his narrative as the two travelers entered Spain from France, while he ignored not only their first stage in Kraków, but also further stopovers in Berlin and Paris.

ka [in:] A. Guyot & C. Massom, *Voyager en France au temps du romantisme. Textes réunis et présentés*, Grenoble 2003, pp. 169-180.

²² Portions of the letters were published in: S. Wnęk, *Ludwik Wodzicki – ziemianin z Tyczyna* [Ludwik Wodzicki, the Tyczyn Landowner] Tyczyn 1997, pp. 34-39. They are kept in the Rzeszów State Archive (Archiwum podworskie Mierów-Jędrzejowiczów ze Staromieścia, sygn. 292).

After three months spent in Spain, the two men made their way via Gibraltar and Malta to Egypt. They landed in Alexandria, which, Tarnowski related, appeared “quite ungainly” when he first saw it from the boat. His images of the East had been formed by his reading of the mythology and *Arabian Nights* stories, so he had half expected, as he humorously put it, to meet “swimming monsters and a bathing Cleopatra with her slave girls” (p. 137). Yet after he had disembarked, he experienced, as did many 19th-century tourists, a dazzlement, a shock²³. Although they were to some extent prepared to meet the Orient, whose foretaste they had experienced in Moorish Spain, they were still stunned by how different and rich-textured life there was: to them, “all seemed exquisite” (p. 141):

Finally our boat made landfall, the land being Africa. We could barely make our way through a crowd of turbaned and slippered Arabs, camels, donkeys, veiled women, but these obstacles were at first welcome, for any living form, be it human or four-legged, alien, outlandish, or original, attracted the eye and attention and brought home the alluring, enchanting thought that here I was in the East. The sight of those people, so unlike ourselves, of those ubiquitous camels scurrying every which way or else resting pack-laden, of the women and children - all this made us forget breakfast, bath, change of clothes. Luckily, there is no shortage of Arabs and camels in Egypt, otherwise I would have tarried at length around the port, just to watch them. And, strangely enough, to such figures a European will never grow accustomed, he will never tire of looking at them, and for the whole duration of his stay in the East always he gazes at them with interest and fond appreciation (p. 139).

The first monument the Poles were taken to see was Pompey’s Pillar. Then they saw so-called Cleopatra’s Needles, the ruins of Nicopolis or Juliopolis east of the Rosetta Gate, and a Ptolemaic necropolis on the shore of the bay, approximately 60m from the Great Catacombs, which had since the 18th century been called Cleopatra’s Bath House. Most likely, Tarnowski and his friend also visited St. Mark’s Coptic church (pp. 142-143). In all, however, he summed up the experience: “scant and meager are Alexandria’s curiosities.” Much like the early sight of Alexandrian *quartier franc*, he was unimpressed by the Ras At-Tin palace built by Muhammad Ali. To the Polish visitor, it seemed quintessential bad taste. He noted caustically: “Every visitor goes to this palace of

²³ The experience was described, among others in: M. Tracz, *Zejsście do piekiel – debarkacja w dziewiętnastowiecznej Aleksandrii jako europejskie doświadczenie szoku kulturowego* [‘Descent into Hell’; Disembarking in 19th-Century Alexandria as a European Experience of a Culture Shock], D. Qurini-Popławska (ed.) *Portolana. Studia Mediterranea*, vol. 1, Kraków 2004, pp. 207-231.

theirs, and then laughs at it and its masters” (p. 145). Returning four weeks later by the same route, he concluded: “Alexandria appeared to us as a shabby European city, with no color or originality to it” (p. 187).

“It is in Cairo that Egypt is to be sought” (p. 145) – such was Tarnowski’s idea that led them both to the country’s capital. Traveling on a train, he observed the changing landscape and noted: “We are in the Delta – now in true Egypt” (p. 146). The city made a strong impression on him, beginning with Ezbekieh, where he watched throngs passing by. He was convinced that he was “inhaling pure Eastern element, and all he could see before him he could consider honest and unsuspectingly authentic displays of the Eastern spirit, the sheerest Oriental authenticity (...), was looking at a magnificent, and, more to the point, a pure instance of an Arab city” (p. 147). Ecstatically, he exclaimed, “What a city, strange, and yet impressive!” (p. 148). He could admire its panorama from the Mokattam Hills citadel (p. 150). While in the city, they experienced the khamsin wind, visited Muhammad Ali’s palace in Shubra, which, like that in Alexandria, he did not appreciate: “Harmony is non-existent, so is thought, when one thing gets in the way of another, one spoiling the next.” They encouraged many traces left after the presence of Napoleon and his army. However, Tarnowski was one of those Poles who were left unaffected by the cult of the famous Corsican; instead, he preferred “to look at the lovely trees” (p. 157).

From their Cairo base, the young Polish aristocrats made some excursions to ancient Egypt’s major attractions, but owing to limited time and their oft-emphasized reluctance to follow beaten tracks, they eventually gave up visiting many traditional tourist “musts” like Thebes; Philae, still then Nile island near the First Cataract, which would eventually be inundated following the construction of the Great Dam in the 1970’s; Nile and Heliopolis Cataracts; or the now-forgotten attraction which was in the 19th century a Petrified Forest (Jebel Khasqab). Instead, they saw the cradle of Christian monasticism, Tebaid, and, implicitly, Cairo’s Coptic St. Sergius’ church (Abu Serga), allegedly built over the grotto (Deir-el-Nassara) where the Holy Family is reported to have rested for the night.

The highlights of their journey included visits to Giza, Saqqara, and Memphis. While in Giza, they scaled, as was then customary, the pyramid of Cheops, with the help of local Arabs, which Tarnowski described in vivid detail: “The pyramid is climbed just so it could be boasted later, ‘I stood on the pyramid’” (p. 171). And indeed, in an extant letter to his sister, he reported with genuine enthusiasm: “I stood on the pyramid! The real, great pyramid, the pyramid of Cheops” (p. 343). Moreover, they engaged in a kind of sporting exercise which was to descend rapidly the pyramid and negotiate another, that of Che-

phren, taking them five minutes in all. “No fly can so confidently move on a flat wall as can they [Arabs] slide along this smooth, rain-slippery surface,” he recalled (p. 171). They wandered inside, saw the corridors, the empty sarcophagi, whose contents, he observed, had been “dragged away all over the world” (p. 172). Our adventurers forwent venturing into the third, smallest pyramid of Menkaure, choosing instead to see the Sphinx, by then still half buried under deserts sands. Tarnowski was much impressed with Saqqara and its necropoleis. Several years before his visit, August Mariette had discovered Serapeum in 1851. The ruins, and above all the human bones scattered all around, could hardly fail to leave visitors unaffected. Our travelers had to crawl along half-collapsed, cramped underground corridors, every so often bumping into things. Thus they explored a burial ground of sacred ibises, one mastaba nearby (p. 174), and the Serapeum itself: an underground complex of burials of sacred Apis bulls (p. 175). Our explorers took with them several mummified ibises, one of which they dissected the following day:

At breakfast, the curious students of Egyptian antiquities that we are, we smashed a pot concealing an ibis and proceeded, with the agility of the best femme de chambre, to disrobe it from its funereal garb. It had been sewn in in thick cloth which, when removed, revealed to us a picture of deception: instead of an embalmed avian mummy, we only saw some some charred feathers and scorched minuscule bones (p. 178).

On the way back to Cairo, they stopped over in the village of Mit-Rahina, near which were found the remains of ancient Memphis. There they saw a statue of Ramses II, an alabaster sphinx, and some alabaster mummification tables. The overturned statue of the great pharaoh sent Tarnowski into raptures. As a next step in their adventure, they made a several-day-long hunting trip to Faiyum Oasis, during which they visited the ruins of Shedyet (Crocodylopolis).

Other than ancient monuments, Tarnowski and Wodzicki spent much time with the local people, taking a keen interest in the realities of their life. In his account, Tarnowski devoted much attention to local culture, ways of life and travel, an aspect he found interesting in its own right. He provided descriptions of conditions of maritime travel, disembarkation, and other crossings by water (e.g., in a *dahabiya* boat across the Nile); the Egyptian railways, which enjoyed an evil reputation among European visitors²⁴, and rides on donkeys, horses, and camels.

²⁴ “So – we chose to travel by train. Railroad workers forewarned us that Allah himself might know at what time we would reach Cairo. Otherwise a respectable religious attitude, it sounded ominous to me as railroad was concerned: it gave me the impression of a warning, a threat that we would never get there” (p. 145). Another Polish traveler, Count Michał Tyszkiewicz, had such recollection of Egyptian rail service: “Attendants at the locomotives and all rail officials were Arabs; it followed that no order was to be hoped for, all was done carelessly, negligently, and incredibly slowly.” (*Egipt zapomniany czyli Michała hr. Tyszkiewicza Dziennik podróży*

The latter mode of transportation being so exotic, it made a particular impression on the European, thus his description is appropriately comprehensive (pp. 160-162). In Saqqara, they stayed in the home of a fellah, where they fell the victim of some obnoxious fleas. In Faiyum Oasis they spent a night in their *dahabiya* cabins, and in a village where – the memoirist stresses – they were “the Columbuses in that settlement” (p. 185). Precious experiences became their share in Cairo, as has been mentioned. Their attention was riveted to a succession of mosques, bazaars, and coffee houses. “There always was need,” Tarnowski remembered, “to stop to look, wonder, enjoy the East” (p. 164). By contrast, he had mixed feelings about watching dervish dances or the “ceremony of horse-trampling of people” (pp. 165-166). He also protested against fake Almee dances performed by young boys in coffee houses. Remembering such experiences, he wrote, “Aplenty are those that spoil the Oriental charms, when, satiate with the more general qualities and broader vistas, we unexpectedly stumbled into a particular that was in no way appealing” (p. 168). During his stay in Egypt, he engaged in some, unsuccessful, hunts for hyenas and birds, including pigeons. Shooting those, incidentally, caused some major commotion with the locals. It appeared that those birds were considered a source of income, their droppings being marketed as fertilizer (p. 178). The same was pointed out by another Polish traveler, Józef Kościelski²⁵.

Throughout, the young aristo looked for comparisons to familiar realities, to his own homeland or to previous travel experience. A “long, narrow, dirty street” reminded him of Jewish quarters in Galician towns; in recently visited Alhambra, he viewed the “few quasi-European streets” with distaste, comparing them to those of the then small-town Rzeszów, Poland (p. 139). During their exciting stay in the d’Orient hotel in Alexandria, the travelers enjoyed a bath, “attended by Arabs and Negroes,” and had breakfast which included bananas, of which Tarnowski remarked, “I do not know when I heard of them” (p. 140). The surroundings, the local folklore, as he often repeated in his story, were of much interest to him. He found exciting nearly all the goings-on and facilities which differed from what he knew in Europe, so he felt annoyed when his guides and ass-drivers would not let him leisurely enjoy what aroused his interest, but instead hurried him along to popular tourist destinations.

On the one hand, Tarnowski appreciated Egypt’s advances in civilization, but on the other he was critical of thoughtless imitation of European aesthetic

do Egiptu i Nubii (1861-1862) oraz 18 rycin z XIX wieku, [Forgotten Egypt, or Count Michał Tyszkiewicz’s Journal of Travel to Egypt and Nubia (1861-1862), with 18 illustrations from the 19th Century] edited and with introduction by A. Niwiński, Warszawa 1994, p. 113).

²⁵ J. Kościelski, *Szkice egipskie. Wrażenia z podróży. Studia i materiały* [Sketches from Egypt; Travel Impressions. Studies and Materials], edited by H. Kaczmarek, Poznań 2007, p. 91.

patterns and lifestyles. As has been said, he viewed with distaste the recently built palaces of Muhammad Ali in Alexandria and Cairo, as he did the spirit and appearance of European quarters. We wrote: “Mehmet Ali may have been a shrewd man, great politician, civilizing influence, supporter of progress, advocate of liberal and humanistic ideas in the East, as is evidenced by his slaughter of the Mamelukes, but Mehmet Ali had no taste” (p. 158). He tried to understand people of the East and through them to explore its beauty, a beauty stemming from its difference. It is worth quoting a characteristic passage:

“Take Cairo, for example. How obvious it is that this city is not yet an end, a center of national life, but a mere means; that it is still not far removed from that time when people congregated in cities to satisfy common needs or for common defense. Although since then it has grown and expanded immeasurably, it has not changed in quality. No one there feels any need to beautify it, to make it more comfortable, or distinct. Why should they, if popular imagination has not changed. Why should a street be lit, swept, suitable for ambulation, when an Arab will tell you that no one lives in the street, and whoever must walk along it has no business seeing it beautiful, and just for loiterers it is not worth improving. Why should he adorn his shop if he does not live in it and only stays there temporarily (temporarily meaning from morning till night, all his life)? Why display his fine products only to tempt a thief, a pasha, or a mameluke? Why sumptuously decorate a house on the outside, where only strangers can see it, when he and his friends are seated indoors? A house is like a man, an Arab says: never mind appearances, as long as the interior is pretty. Finally, why should they bother to alter anything in Cairo, when they believe that the world has seen no fairer city, when, such as it, they like it above all else and ever will? The immobile, primeval quality in objects and people, unchanged for centuries in external appearance, and the internal state of thought, imaginings, and enlightenment – this is the main, greatest charm of the Orient; it is the reason why Cairo is so beautiful. And so we will find that the Arabs are right to call it wonderful, absent though may be boulevards, Venetian palaces, and Gothic towers. Therefore, every insignificant detail, in itself perhaps unsightly, bears witness to this primeval nature, shows character, and to us is dramatically alien. But as a whole, Cairo presents itself as impressive, grandiose, and above all so fantastic as no other European capital.”

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