

40      *The Royal Danish Academy and F. L. Norden's  
Voyage I-II 1755*

By  
**Dr. ERIK DAL**  
Editor of the Academy's Publications

Peace, prosperity and progress characterize most of the eighteenth century in the absolute but enlightened monarchy of Denmark-Norway: Peace, uninterrupted over eighty years, the longest period in the history of Denmark. Prosperity, due to favourable market conditions and a flourishing merchant navy. Progress, increasing humanity and liberality in legislation, social conditions and approaches to philosophy and scholarship. The capital Copenhagen mustered a population of 70,000, not counting the vast garrison, and was one of Europe's important harbours.

Small wonder, therefore, that an enlightened king like CHRISTIAN VI would support promising plans like the expedition of Baron d'ESNEVAL and Captain F. L. NORDEN into Egypt, and that he did not want the scholarly results to be neglected, even when the Baron's basic plan had proved a will-o'-the-wisp, while Norden's impressive and very personal career had come to a premature end in 1742.

That same autumn an innovation took place, apparently irrelevant to Egyptology. The epoch-making historian HANS GRAM proposed to his fellow-members of the Royal Coin and Medal Commission that they redefine it as a Society for the National Antiquities and History. But instead, the four worthy gentlemen decided that such a society

should not specialize in any field but feel free to commit itself to all branches of science and scholarship. This plan, approved by His Majesty, was the basis of what is now the ROYAL DANISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND LETTERS, still today an independent body with the Sovereign as its Patron. It embraces both the sciences and the humanities in its membership, its international cooperation and its publication series, ever since 1745 and currently exchanged with learned bodies also in Egypt.

Another of the several deaths which must be mentioned in this short chapter activated the brand-new society or academy in relation to Norden's invaluable material. Christian VI had not hesitated in fulfilling the wish of the late explorer and of the two Counts DANNE-SKIOLD-SAMSØE: He had invited CARL MARCUS TUSCHER to settle in Copenhagen on very distinguished conditions if he would commit himself to engraving the plates for his friend's posthumous work. Marcus Tuscher accepted, and though also he died too early – 45 years old – he acquired a remarkable place in the history of Danish art in only seven years, from October 1743 to New Year 1751.

However, during this period Christian VI deceased in 1746 and was succeeded by his son FREDERIK V who handed the whole affair over to the Academy. In deference to his father's generosity, the king promised to pay the rest of Tuscher's work; but expenses and income arising from the publication itself were left to be taken care of by the Academy (1747).

As in many other cases, the planning of the complicated *Voyage d'Egypte et de Nubie* was commissioned to the eminent and effective Hans Gram. He, however, died in February 1748, and under the auspices of the Academy, i.e. its secretary HENRIK (Hendriksen, recently nobilitated as) Count of HIELMSTIERNE, the material was entrusted to the historian BERNHARD MØLLMANN, Gram's successor

42 as head of the Royal Library; it was at that time 75 year old and not open to the public. Professor Møllmann happened to be probably the least efficient chief librarian in the history of that institution; but nevertheless, after tedious negotiations and reminders over several years, he deserved credit for editing the finished and the much longer unfinished parts of Norden's manuscript and for translating it into French, the translation being checked by other persons.

Now was the time to find two printers, one for the letterpress printing and another one for the 159 plates, almost exclusively engraved by Marcus Tuscher (see next chapter). Several charming head and tail pieces with Egyptian motifs were added to embellish the book. With but a few exceptions, they were drawn by Tuscher and etched by JONAS HAAS for Vol. I, while PETER CRAMER designed and etched them for Vol. II. Dutch high quality paper was imported, and the Hamburg copperprinter JACOB MIRGELBERG was royally appointed to live in Copenhagen and print the plates; after his death in 1752 his widow took over the responsibility. For the letterpress printing, GOTTMANN FRIEDRICH KIESEL was the obvious choice; he was printing other Academy publications and was one of several good Copenhagen printers at that time. The printing office belonged to the Copenhagen Orphanage, originally specializing in Bibles and Hymnbooks, and Norden's *Voyage* was its finest job.

In January 1748, invitations in Danish, German or French were emitted to prospective subscribers in several countries. In the autumn of 1750, Tuscher saw the first volume finished, while the second volume was delayed till August 1755. The number of copies seems to have been between 300 and 400, and as the books generated considerable international attention they have become very rare and expensive, the market price today being thousands of US dollars.

All plates from Norden's *Voyage* have been reproduced from the copy of the Danish sculptor Johannes Wiedewelt (1731-1802) now in the Academy library. The headpieces of the *Voyage* are dealt with on p. 60. The lower part of p. 46 is typical for the typography of the *Voyage*.

VOYAGE  
D'EGYPTE  
ET DE  
NUBIE,  
PAR  
MR. FREDERIC LOUÏS NORDEN,  
CAPITAINE DES VAISSEAUX  
DU ROI.

*Ouvrage enrichi de Cartes & de Figures  
deffinées sur les lieux, par  
l'Auteur même.*

TOME PREMIER.



A COPENHAGUE,  
DE L'IMPRIMERIE DE LA MAISON ROYALE  
DES ORPHELINS.

MDCCCLV.

FRIEDEWELT

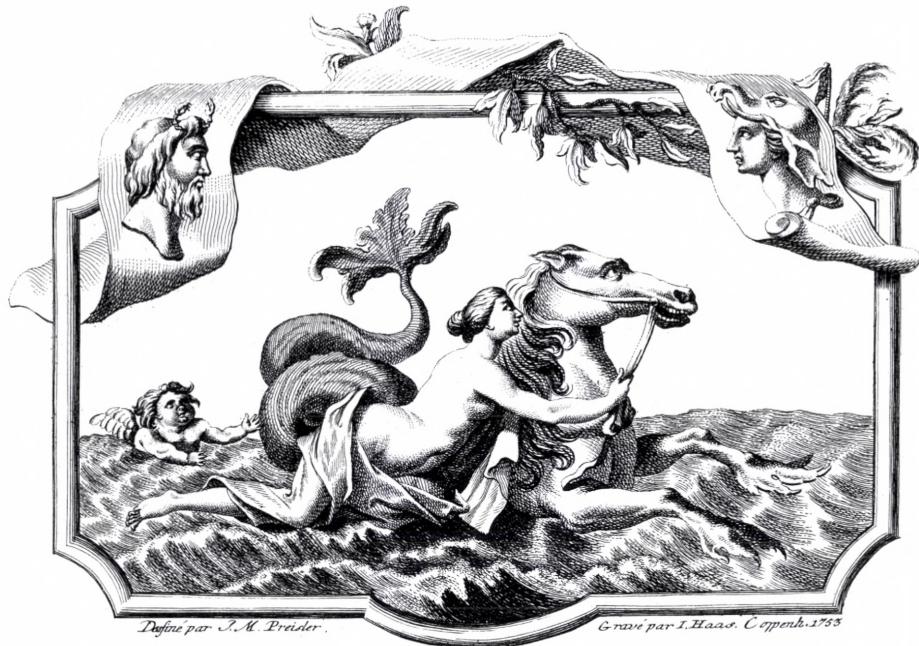
- 44      The full collation of *Voyage d'Egypte et de Nubie* runs thus:
- I: Portrait, frontispiece. 40 unnumb. pages including *Préface*, a quotation, *Table des planches*. Pp. 104, including 1.-4. *Partie*. Plates 1-59.
- II: Title. Pp. 105-276, including 5.-8. *Partie*. Plates 60-159. Pp. 277-288: *Tables des matières*.

In practice, it would have been sound policy to bind the two books as one volume with text and one with plates; they would count 330+320 pages, and certain copies may have been treated thus.

ASGER LOMHOLT's detailed report of the difficult negotiations and decisions which took up most of the Academy meetings, shows that the preliminaries of Vol. I were *not* ready in 1750. A benevolent fate has preserved at least one copy of the entire *Voyage* in cardboard as protection for the heavy books until they were safe in the binder's hand. In the copy – in uninterrupted family possession – Vol. I contains but the four text parts with plates 1-60 while Vol. II includes all preliminaries of both volumes with 1755 on both title pages. In spite of an earlier decision not to distribute Vol. I separately, it was released in 1751, incomplete as it was. There is no doubt that the Academy gained an income from the work, but unfortunately Hielmstierne's sales accounts have been lost.

The Academy did not follow up the success of the *Voyage*. The plates which represented a fortune were stored in the Orphanage, and already in 1756 Hielmstierne proposed to sell them before a slight deterioration developed further. Next year LOCKYER DAVIS & CHARLES REYMERS in London were able to offer their fully illustrated English translation: *Travels in Egypt and Nubia* with footnotes by PETER TEMPLEMAN (and a new footnote p.48).

This was but the first of numerous English, German, French and Danish editions in varying sizes, with selected and/or reduced new



*Dessiné par J. M. Preider.*

*Gravé par I. Haas. Copenh. 1755*

## P R É F A C E.



es Egyptiens se vantent d'être un des Peuples les plus anciens de l'Univers. Peu de Nations en effet pourroient leur disputer cette prérogative. Leurs prétentions à cet égard se fondent sur une multitude de Monumens marqués au coin de l'antiquité la plus reculée; titres d'autant plus respectables, que les Auteurs de tous les siècles en ont parlé avec admiration.

Un Pays rendu fameux par tant de merveilles de l'Antiquité n'a pu que s'attirer l'attention des Curieux & déve-

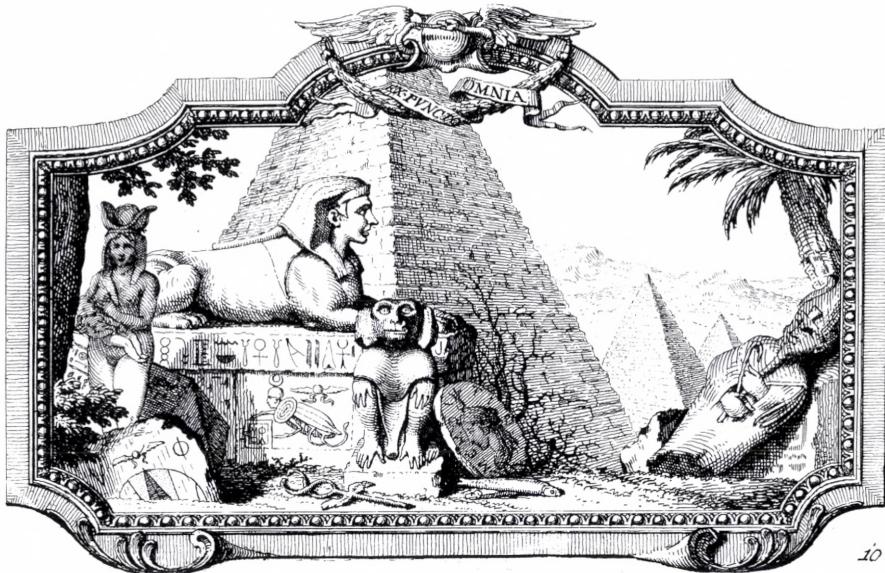
46 plates and even without illustrations; they are listed by A. Lomholt p. 97 sqq. together with references to the more important scholarly reviews in several countries. A certain fascination radiates from the cheap French edition from *An VIII*, 1800, since more likely than not it was useful for the civil army of scholars and artists responsible for NAPOLEON BONAPARTE's unparalleled *Description de l'Égypte*.

Needless to say that the administration and implementation of Norden's *Voyage* was by far the most important accomplishment of the new Royal Academy; still almost 250 years later it is difficult, indeed impossible, to point out another Academy publication of similar magnificence. Even in the more general perspective of the history of Danish printing the same holds true. This history reached its peak just around 1750, partly because of the emergence of highly qualified printing offices after a devastating fire in the year 1728.

Marcus Tuscher's distinguished and vital importance for the work will be treated in the next chapter by an historian of art, but also the layout of the book deserves a comment.

Several of the more important and impressive Danish books, especially on topography and natural history, saw the light in this epoch and represent a stylistic change from the heavy and pompous Baroque style to the lighter French periods of Régence and Rococo. In all periods, however, German types and decorative material were supreme on the Danish market, as was the use of *Fraktur* types in Danish texts instead of Roman type fonts.

The stout title page of Norden's book with its heavy headlines shows more than a tinge of progression from late Baroque style. But the text pages are entirely different. The type font is very close to the late Baroque font revived in our time as Janson Roman (though actually designed by the Hungarian Nic. Kiš shortly before 1700). But



## PYRAMIDES d'EGYPTE.



vant que de quitter le Cayre & ses environs, je ne scaurois me dispenser de parler des Monumens les plus dignes de la curiosité de ceux, qui voyagent en Egypte: j'entends les Pyramides, qu'on a mises autrefois au nombre des sept Merveilles du Monde, & qu'on admire encore aujourd'hui, depuis le Cayre jusqu'à Meduun.

Des PYRAMIDES, en général.

Ces superbes Monumens ne se trouvent qu'en Egypte; car quoiqu'on en voye une à Rome, qui a servi de tombeau à C. Cestius, elle ne peut passer que pour une simple imitation, & la moindre de celles d'Egypte la surpassé de beaucoup en grandeur. Ainsi elle ne mérite pas, qu'on en fasse une exception de la Thèse générale; & elle n'empêche pas qu'on ne puisse dire, que les Pyramides ne se trouvent qu'en Egypte.

*Tom. I.*

T

Une

48 the leading between the lines creates an extremely light page, much more so because the marginal notes are included in a printed area which would not be burdensome, even if filled out with full lines. It is a far cry from most contemporary typography in the traditional compressed and heavy style, and an innocent question may be admitted: How much was a conscious new style and how much a pious wish to blow up the text of the late pioneer slightly in order to balance the impressive plate sections?

The typography of the present booklet is based upon a linear reduction of the plates to fifty percent. The printed area is photocomposed with Janson Roman with reasonable leading though relatively larger and less sumptuous than in the old book. Several details in the typography are influenced by the stately original work.

\* It is this 1757 edition that puzzles M. Raphaël Mahl in Régine Deforges' successful novel *La bicyclette bleue* (1983) when he tells the principal character Léa that he often went to dine Chez Catherine, "un excellent restaurant, tenu par M. Dieu, grand cuisinier et bibliophile avec lequel je me querellais sur l'année de l'édition du *Voyage d'Égypte et de Nubie* de Norden. Lui tenait à 1755 moi à 1757; c'est lui qui avait raison". The reference is due to Mr. Cornelius Holck Colding.