

Ancient Egypt in the Writings of Ahmed Mohamed Ismail 1912-1934

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“My Sheikh al-Amir (Ahmed Mohamed Ismail) was a university before any university in Egypt.”¹

(Abdel Rahman, Saad 2022)

Abstract

Egyptology has occupied the minds of many Egyptian intellectuals, whose attitude towards the learning of Egyptology differed according to their upbringing, environment and education. Among them was Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed Ismail, an Upper Egyptian religious educator from Asyut province who wrote many articles on Egyptology and advocated the teaching of hieroglyphs in Egyptian schools. He also visited archaeological sites and described them in his articles. His provincial Upper Egyptian background and his religious education comes through in his description of these archaeological sites. He explained Western interest in Egyptology and modern Egyptians' need to learn from them. This article examines the features of ancient Egypt in the mind of Ahmed Mohamed Ismail and his suggestions for developing education about it among his countrymen.²

Keywords: Ancient Egypt, Sheikh al-Amir, Ahmed Mohamed Ismail, Maabda, Meir, Asyut, hieroglyphs.

Introduction

Many Egyptian writers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries tried to describe the branches of Egyptology in Arabic, and the status of the field among their countrymen,

¹ Abdel Rahman, Saad: *Egyptian Education during half a century, ideas and proposals of primary education teacher*, 1st ed. Egyptian General Organization for Book, 2022, p. 13.

عبد الرحمن، سعد (2022) التعليم المصري في نصف قرن أفكار ومقترحات مدرّس تعليم أولى، الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب، ط1، ص 13.

² I will always be indebted to my mentors throughout this journey:

- Prof. Stephen Quirke & Prof. Donald Reid

- Prof. Hassan Selim & Prof. Emad Aboughazi

- Prof. Mohamed Abd El-Raheem & Prof. Saudi Sadiq, Mr. Ahmed Mousa and my dear colleague, Dr. Abeer Eladany and last but not least, the IFAO & DAI libraries and their beloved staff: Agnès, Omnia, Marian, Anna, Amira, Laila, Gaffar, Ayman, and Laila El Sawi. Words can't tell how much I owe it to them as well.

and to suggest ways to achieve progress in it. Among them was Sheikh Ahmed Effendi Mohamed Ismail al-Amir (1877-1962)³, whose long life saw him through several stages of Egypt's recent history.⁴ A. M. Ismail (fig. 1) believed that science and knowledge are the only means to achieve the progress, the prosperity and the development of nations.

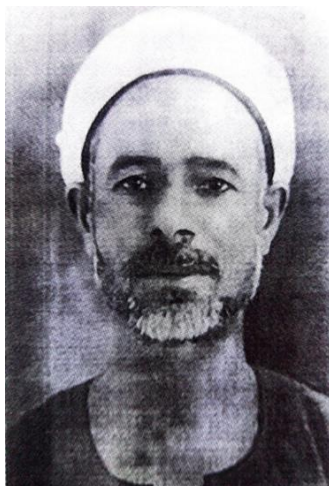


Fig. 1: Ahmed Mohamed Ismail.
(Courtesy of the family, Asyut).

A. M. Ismail published his articles in 17 different newspapers and 3 magazines. Some of these were mouthpieces for political parties—some in favor of the British occupation of Egypt, others against, and yet other neutral. In addition to such national publication outlets, he also published extensively in the regional outlet *al-Montazar*, because of his

³ The family of Ahmed Mohamed Ismail used the title “Sheikh al-Amir”, his friends used the title “Ahmed Effendi” Ismail in their correspondence with him, while he, himself, used his triple name “Ahmed Mohamed Ismail” in signing his articles for newspapers, I will use, in this study, “A. M. Ismail” to refer to Sheikh Ahmed Effendi Mohamed Ismail al-Amir.

⁴ A. M. Ismail was born in the village of al-Sawalem, Abnub, Asyut in 1877. His father was the village “Mazoon” (marriage contracts’ maker), A. M. Ismail learned the principles of reading at the age of seven and followed it by memorizing the Holy Quran and in 1897 he started his work as a clerk (under training) in the “Sharia” Courts, firstly in Abnub, then moved to the “Sharia” Court in Asyut and then returned to Abnub’s, then he left this type of unpaid work to be the instructor of religious class “Kottab” that was owned by his brother Sheikh Mohamed al-Amir. Then moved to the “Kottab al-Adli Amiri” (religious class) in Asyut where he continued two years with a monthly salary of 700 Millim. He passed the exam of the Education Ministry, in 1903, to become governmental employee in a religious class but soon received a better offer from Sayed Pasha Khashaba: to resign from his governmental job in “al-Adli”’s office and become the supervisor of the private “Kottab” (religious class) that the pasha established in his estate, with a salary of two English pounds and a Kilo of wheat, A. M. Ismail accepted the offer and started his work in September 1905, he was keen to teach not only the students of his class, but also his colleagues; the supervisors of neighbouring classes. In his class, he did not satisfy with teaching fundamental lessons imposed by the ministry, A. M. Ismail also added other lessons, mainly practical ones such as taking students to the village market to learn how to sell and buy, he also taught his students the manufacture of rural handcrafts such as baskets. He continued responsible for this “Kottab” (religious class) until 1948 when the class converted to be primary school with A. M. Ismail as its director (*Nazer* ناظر), he continued in this position until his retirement in 1951. (Abdel Rahman, Saad 2022, pp. 16-18).

and Egyptology. My study⁸ will examine the means by which A. M. Ismail attempted to carry out his beliefs—how did this religious man see ancient Egypt during the first half of the 20th century?

Ahmed Mohamed Ismail's main writings about ancient Egypt

1. Ancient Egyptian monuments as seen by A. M. Ismail

An article⁹ which A. M. Ismail wrote in 1912 first indicated his broad knowledge of many ancient Egyptian temples, including the pyramids of Giza, the temples of “Edfu” and “Karnak”, and the palace of “*Anas al-Wujood*” in Aswan. For him, such monuments proved: “*the greatness of those ancients and the most eloquent utterance of the civilization they had achieved.*” He praised Westerners’ great interest in visiting these monuments and in documenting them.¹⁰ He described the work of one of these archaeologists¹¹ at Meir:¹²

“.... Last year, an English Orientalist scholar, a young man under thirty years of age, came to the town of Meir in Manfalut and stayed for more than four months, enduring hardship and fatigue while copying ancient Egyptian inscriptions and drawing on the walls of the tombs there. He left before finishing, however, promising to return to complete his work.

I met him while he was working, and he showed me many of the drawings and inscriptions he had copied from the monuments of Middle and Upper Egypt..... I wish our youth were as interested in visiting the monuments of our ancestors to benefit from them in the way that Western scholars do ...”.

A. M. Ismail described the writings and inscriptions he saw in Egyptian temples: “*They (the Ancient Egyptians) took great care in perfecting their hieroglyphic inscriptions... It is as if they thought their hieroglyphics would become extinct, so they engraved many of their texts with the most beautiful calligraphy and drawings, on the walls of their*

⁸ The title was inspired from “Ancient Egypt in the Writings of Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid” by Ahmed M. Mekawy Ouda.

⁹ Ismail, A. M. (1912) *al-Athar al-Qadima* “Ancient Monuments” *al-Garida*, 1752, p. 1.

¹⁰ Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 92-93.

¹¹ A. M. Ismail, mostly, talks about BLACKMAN, Aylward Manley (1883-1956). Blackman recorded, for the EES, the complete series of tombs at Meir in Middle Egypt, producing six volumes., He worked at Meir 1912-14, 1921, and 1949-50 (Bierbrier, Morris L. - Who Was Who in Egyptology, 2012, p. 62)

¹² Meir: was a village in Upper Egypt, about 50 kms northwest of modern Asyut. It includes tombs, dating to the 6th and 12th Dynasties (2345—2181 and 1985—1795 B.C respectively), that were badly pillaged during the 19th century and eventually excavated and recorded by Aylward Blackman between 1912 and 1950. They contained the funerary remains of the governors of “*Cusae*” and members of their families, while the shaft-tombs of their servants were cut into the surrounding cliffs. There are few remains of the old town of Cusae (Qis), the capital of the fourteenth province of Upper Egypt, which was situated about 8 kilometers to the east. (Nicholson, Ian Shaw The British Museum Dictionary Of Ancient Egypt, The British Museum Press, 1995, p. 180)

temples. The ancient Egyptians wanted, with their inscriptions to preserve eternal evidence indicating their high status and prestige.”¹³

2. Champollion in the writings of A. M. Ismail

A. M. Ismail described how hieroglyphs were deciphered in the modern era expressing his admiration for Champollion, the hero who made this breakthrough:

*“.... That nation (Ancient Egypt) became extinct, and its language became extinct with it. but those monuments and the inscriptions on them still exist, but unfortunately no one could read them until Champollion deciphered them from the Rosetta Stone from Rashid (Rosetta). Champollion understood what was previously unknown, and after him many Western scholars following in his footsteps unlocked more of the hieroglyphic mysteries.”*¹⁴

3. The study of hieroglyphs and Egyptology in Egypt in the writings of A. M. Ismail

A. M. Ismail described in many of his articles the history of studying Egyptology in Egypt, starting with the School of the Ancient Language (*Madrasat al-Lisan al-Qadim*) which the government founded under Khedive Ismail.¹⁵ A. M. Ismail also recorded his admiration for Ahmed Kamal (later Pasha) and his excellence in teaching ancient Egyptian.

A. M. Ismail later encouraged archaeologists to teach courses at the Egyptian University founded in 1908 so that Egyptian youths could learn about the achievements of their ancient ancestors. He advised Ahmad Kamal's students to pay careful attention to their studies . . . and not be distracted by their jobs. *“.... It would be a shame to see foreigners more interested than Egyptians in studying the language of hieroglyphs, especially after Ahmad Kamal had paved the way for modern Egyptians to study them...”*¹⁶

In 1913 A. M. Ismail blamed his own countrymen for being partly responsible for the deterioration of Egypt in modern times. He argued that the existence of ancient Egyptian monuments in the modern country should have put it at the forefront of the world's nations. But modern Egyptians had fallen far behind their forefathers' lead.

Following the 1919 national revolution, A. M. Ismail began to blame British colonialism: *“If we were independent, we would have a special school to teach the hieroglyphs that are essential to understanding the ancient monuments. This was done in Europe.”*¹⁷

¹³ Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 92-93.

¹⁴ Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 92-93.

¹⁵ A. M. Ismail used to erase (write then cross) the name of any ex-ruler in his memoirs.

¹⁶ Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 93-94.

¹⁷ Ismail, M. A. (1920) *Lw Konna Mostaqleen* “If We Were Independent” *al-Ahram*, 13046, p. 4.

On 23 April 1922, A. M. Ismail wrote a letter¹⁸ to Minister of Education, Mustafa Maher Pasha describing attempts to teach Egyptology to Egyptians during the first decade of the 20th century. The goal was to graduate qualified Egyptian Egyptologists who could reclaim the administration of the Antiquities Service from Europeans. Lack of adequate funding, however, had led such early attempts to fail.

He also objected that the archaeology and hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt were only taught in Western languages and insisted that they be taught in Arabic to make them more widely available. With Egypt's progress towards independence in 1922, it was high time that such subjects be taught in Arabic. He also recommended that hieroglyphs be taught in the School of Fine Arts since the hieroglyphs themselves were pictures of images. He recommended that Ahmad Kamal be the instructor of this syllabus and that its graduates would be best qualified for employment by the Antiquities Service.

After Ahmed Kamal's death in 1923, however, he recognized the emerging younger generation of Egyptian Egyptologists: Selim Hassan, Sami Gabra, Mahmoud Hamza, and Georgy Sobhi (noting Sobhi was fluent in both hieroglyphs and Coptic).¹⁹

4. A. M. Ismail's Writing about Pepi-Ankh's 6th Dynasty Tomb at Meir (Asyut)

A. M. Ismail was proud that the tomb of Pepi-Ankh at Meir was excavated by Egyptians and republished his article about the discovery in more than one newspaper.²⁰ He emphasized that the direction of the excavation by an Egyptian was unprecedented: "...*I went with His Excellency [Ahmed Kamal] to see this historic tomb, which no one knew before now...*". He described the tomb carefully in archaeological terms which reflected his own terminology and background.²¹

First, he described the owner of the tomb, "a tomb of an official of the 6th Egyptian dynasty, called Pepi-Ankh Harabwho was the chief priest of Hathor, the goddess of Qusiya ...was buried there with his wife Ama Hatt. Then he described the entrance of the tomb and the scenes at its entryway and the scenes inside. All emphasized the importance of Pepi-Ankh's position and the titles inscribed at its entrance.

A. M. Ismail admired the variety of Pepi-Ankh's priestly and secular activities, including relaxing to music played at mealtimes. Ismail's personal vision infused his description of the key scenes of the tomb's owner. He noted that the owner varied in accordance with his varied functions. A leopard skin garment was most important.²²

¹⁸ Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, pp. 126-127.

¹⁹ Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, pp. 228-229.

²⁰ Ismail, A. M. (1913) *Iktshaf Athr Mn al-Ayla al-Sadesa al-Masrya* "Excavating Ancient Monument from the Egyptian sixth Dynasty" *al-Moayed*, 6988, p. 1.

Ismail, A. M. (1913) *Iktshaf Athr Mn al-Ayla al-Sadesa al-Masrya* "Excavating Ancient Monument from the Egyptian sixth Dynasty" *al-Garyda*, 1874, p. 1.

أحمد محمد اسماعيل "إكتشاف أثر قديم من العائلة السادسة المصرية"، "المؤيد"، عدد (6988) 19 مايو 1913.

أحمد محمد اسماعيل "إكتشاف أثر قديم من العائلة السادسة المصرية"، "الجريدة" عدد (1874) 13 مايو 1913.

²¹ App. (1) the scenes of Pepi Ankh tomb as described by the words of A. M. Ismail.

²² Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, pp. 97-99.

Despite being a religious-educated Muslim himself, he mentioned the scenes worshipping the goddess Hathor and making beer without any negative comment. Describing the appearance of the tomb's two (male and female) owners, he pointed out that "... you mostly find both of them in the scenes, wearing necklaces and bracelets with no difference between them....".

A. M. Ismail was largely inspired in his brief description of the tomb by Ahmed Kamal's report published in the Annals of the Antiquities Department.

Despite the importance of the objects found in the tomb and their description by Kamal in his report, A. M. Ismail did not mention them. Perhaps this was because it was unclear at the time what would be kept in the Khashaba Museum (in Asyut) and what would be sold by the museum owner who had sponsored the Pepi Ankh excavation.²³

Terms from A. M. Ismail's local environment appeared in his descriptions of the tomb, such as water jugs قلال/ tomb القبر/ two ewers and two basins ابريقان وطشتان/ sixth Dynasty الملحود العائلة السادسة/ buried.

A. M. Ismail used the term "صحيفة القبر" to describe a part of the western wall in the main chamber of the tomb of Pepi-Ankh, which is often referred to, by archaeologists, as the tomb's stela.

Other modern Arabic writings used the same term "صحيفة القبر" as equivalent to "stela".²⁴ Hassan Kamal, for example, used the same term "صحيفة القبر" to refer to a certain scene that was on a stela at Cairo Museum: "...It was also found painted on a صحيفة قبر (stela) at the Cairo Antiques House (Cairo Museum)".

Linking the past with the present in his description of the tomb, A. M. Ismail relates that Pepi Ankh spent part of his time hunting and fishing, many of the present-day habits of the elite were taken from these ancient people.

".... ploughing the land (in Ancient Egypt) was carried out with ploughs that were not different, in any way, from our current ploughs..."

A. M. Ismail continued reporting the archaeological discoveries in Meir. In 1931 he revisited Pepi-Ankh's tomb when he heard of new excavations at the same location.²⁵

²³ Kamal, A. (1915) Le Tombeau Nouveau de Méîr, Annales de Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte, vol. 15, Cairo, pp. 209-258.

²⁴ Kamal, Hassan (1936) al-Nabatat al-Masrya al-Qadima: al-Fawakeh "Ancient Egyptian Plants: Fruits" al-Moqtataf, 88, pp. 214-220.

Ismail, A. M. (1913) Iktshaf Athr Mn al-Ayla al-Sadesa al-Masrya "Excavating Ancient Monument from the Egyptian sixth Dynasty" al-Garyda, 1874, p. 1.

²⁵ A. M. Ismail (1931) Ikteshaf Athr Masry Kadeem Fi Baldat al-Qusya "Excavation of ancient Egyptian monument in al-Qusya" al-Ahram, 11569, p. 5.

In spite of the absence of his friends Ahmed Kamal and Sayed Khashaba,²⁶ A. M. Ismail continued reporting on archaeological excavations in Asyut and wishing that more would be found in his hometown of Asyut.

A. M. Ismail believed that Western nations recognized and appreciated the value of ancient Egypt. This is why they sent delegations to excavate in Egypt and transfer valuable objects found to their own museums and private collections long before the rise of ancient Greek civilization. Like the ancient Greeks, they were inspired to build their own civilization on the ruins of ancient Egypt.

5. A. M. Ismail's views on the Asyut Museum and other regional museums

Writing in *al-Ahram* to correct the number of regional museums in one of their articles, A. M. Ismail added the Aswan and Asyut museums and confirmed that all these regional museums were the idea of the late archaeologist Ahmed Kamal, who: “*created these regional museums from nothingness to existence*”.

A. M. Ismail spoke about Sayed Khashaba's initiative to establish a museum in Asyut. Ismail considered Sayed Khashaba to be the first Egyptian who ventured into the field of archaeological excavations²⁷ and the establishment of a private museum “.... *this happened when Egypt was in the focus of foreigners' interest, but its people did not pay enough attention to its antiquities. Sayed Khashaba, an active member of the Asyut elite who decided to venture into the world of archaeological excavations, asked the government to authorize him to dig for antiquities in Asyut. He was granted authorization four years ago, assembled a large collection of antiquities, and last year established a museum in Asyut to display them. He asked the well-known Ahmed Bey Kamal, curator of the Cairo Antikhana Museum to arrange his Asyut Museum along the lines of the Cairo Museum*”.²⁸

6. A. M. Ismail's deploring the dispersal of Egyptian Antiquities to the World's Museums

In 1920, A. M. Ismail published an article in the Arabic newspaper *al-Ahram* entitled “If We Were Independent”²⁹ which suggested that the on-going British occupation was the reason for Egypt's underdevelopment in education and in Egyptology in particular.

He also attributed the export of precious Egyptian antiquities to the lack of freedom: “...*If we were independent, those who control our affairs would not deprive us from searching for the antiquities of our ancient ancestors, and would not allow themselves*

²⁶ Ahmed Kamal died in 1923, and Sayed Khashaba left the field of excavations as both Ahmed Kamal and Maspero left their positions at the Antiquities Service.

²⁷ Many Egyptians, before Sayed Khashaba, applied for antiquities' excavations and few of them were granted the approval. In 1908 Ahmed Bey Zaki and Idris Bey Ragheb were granted concession to excavate in Minia (between Der el-Berchah and Sheikh Zobeida) under the direction of Ahmed Bey Kamal from 22 October 1909 to the 30th of October. (Kamal, Ahmed Rapport Sur Les Fouilles Faites Dans La Montagne De Sheikh Said, ASAE, TOME X, pp. 145-154).

²⁸ Ismail, M. A. (1913) Mathaf Asyut “Asyut Museum” *al-Moayed*, 6916, p. 1.

²⁹ Ismail, M. A. (1920) Law Konna Mostaqleen “If we were independent”, *al-Ahram*, 13046, p. 4.

to transfer what they found to their countries without a least benefit to our country, even though it is said that the price of what is transferred to those countries is many times more than our debts - but these antiquities should be distributed to our local museums; each governorate should have its own museum”.

Egyptology was widely taught in the West but was very limited in British-occupied Egypt. A. M. Ismail believed that the underdevelopment of Egyptology teaching in colonized Egypt was the reason for the export of its priceless antiquities.

He clarified his point of view: “...*the most important antiquities and the most beautiful artefacts, including obelisks, statues, coffins and papyri, which are estimated to be worth tens of millions of pounds, were leaked to Europe and America without price or at the cheapest price because the Egyptians were ignorant of hieroglyphs & Egyptology and did not know the value of these antiquities*”³⁰

7. A. M. Ismail’s Call for Egyptians to Contribute to the 1922 Centennial of Champollion’s Decipherment of Hieroglyphs

Many French institutions, in 1922, were interested in organizing celebration with centenary of Champollion’s achievement. A. M. Ismail was interested in Egypt’s participation in these celebrations because “.... *Egypt was the homeland of ancient Egyptian antiquities, monuments and writings that were behind Champollion’s achievement which supplied the world with invaluable benefit.*”

A. M. Ismail pushed for Ahmed Kamal or other Egyptians to participate in the French celebrations of the centennial of Champollion’s decipherment. This would be a suitable occasion to announce Ahmad Kamal’s hieroglyphic-Arabic dictionary. If this were not possible, Egypt itself should organize a celebration of Champollion’s achievement,³¹ to let the world know that Egypt does not forget favours of men who served Egypt.”³²

On 30 June 1922, A. M. Ismail sent a letter to Ahmed Kamal congratulating him:

*“...The newspapers published the news of the Egyptian government participation in the French celebration with the centenary of Champollion’s achievement and your delegation, together with Ali Bahgat...., as Egypt’s representatives I was very pleased and thanked God very much for that”*³³

³⁰ Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, pp. 120-121.

³¹ Ismail. A. M. (1922) *al-Khat al-Hieroghlyphy Fi Zekra Moktashefah* “hieroglyphic inscription in the memoirs of its excavator”, al-Ahram, 13662, p. 1.

³² A. M. Ismail sent his suggestion, in a letter, to Ahmed Zaki Pasha, on 16th March 1922, ex-secretary general of the cabinet from 1911 to 1921 (Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 126).

³³ Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 128.

8. A. M. Ismail employs his archaeological awareness to promote Ahmed Khashaba in the 1926 parliamentary elections

On 9 May 1926, A. M. Ismail delivered a speech at Meir (in the presence of a large audience of Asyut mayors and notables) to promote his favourite candidate, Ahmed Khashaba, for the House of Representatives elections. A. M. Ismail described the tourist & archaeological attractions of Egypt which made Egypt a point of attraction for foreigners who came with multiple purposes. Some foreigners just wanted to enjoy with Egypt's weather and monuments, while the British decided to occupy Egypt because of its strategic location. In its drive for independence, qualified representatives in parliament such as Ahmed Khashaba were best suited to lead the drive for independence...."³⁴ For A. M. Ismail, Ahmed Khashaba was the suitable candidate who can play this role perfectly.

9. Factories from Ancient Egypt at Abnub (Asyut)

An unknown archaeological site (near Abnub and next to *al-Der al-Mollaq* "the Hanging Monastery", 2 km northeast of *al-Maabdah al-Sharqiya*) (fig. 3) so attracted the attention of A. M. Ismail that he wrote about it more than once in his articles.

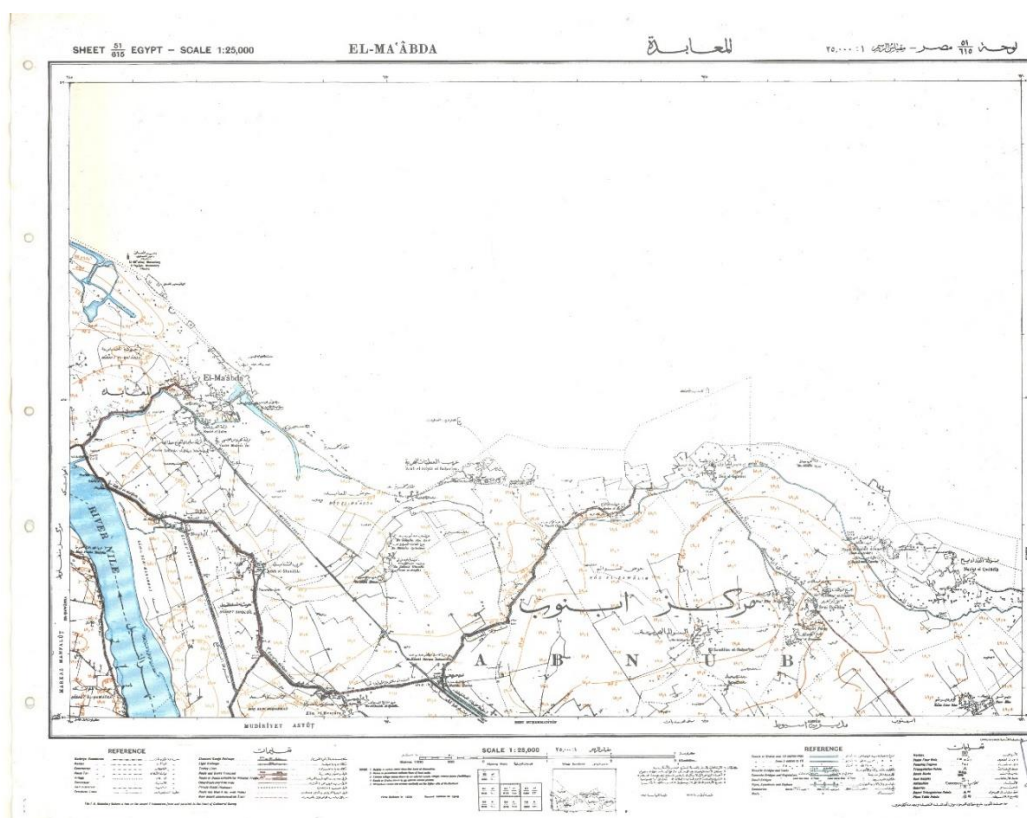


Fig. 3: *al-Maabdah*, Abnub (Asyut)
Plate no.299/49, (2nd edition,1949), Egyptian Survey Administration, Egypt
<https://cedejcarto.org/MapDetails?id=3826>

³⁴ Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, pp. 148-149.

A. M. Ismail described it in 1926³⁵ and invited archaeologists to carry out archaeological investigations in this area because he expected it to contain the remains of ancient factories which he described as follows: "...I saw what astonished me; many factories that occupied a great area (about 8 Feddans³⁶) at the foot of the mountain, all of factories built of mud bricks- covered with dust and only the top of these buildings still appears.....I stood in front of these buildings, bewildered and amazed, as I saw that they were based on exquisite geometric shapes, from wide to narrow and from high to low, as the technique of building required. Their roofs are of mud in the shape of domes."

In December 1926, the Egyptian government expropriated, at al-Maabda, 28 Feddans of Sheikh Mohamed Radwan property for the sake of the Antiquities Service. (fig.4) Probably it was the impact of A. M. Ismail's call.

الوقائع المصرية - العدد ١١٣ في ٦ ديسمبر سنة ١٩٢٦	
<p>المساحة وذلك بعد خصم الأقطاعات المستعقة للحكومة على حدود حدوده وآخرين حسب المين عدد :</p> <p>٣٥ أصل المين حسب المشرى من الحكومة (مصلحة الأوقاف الأميرية)</p> <p>٣٠ مسند لمصلحة الأوقاف الأميرية قيمة الأقطاعات المستعقة للحكومة على المالكين</p> <p>١٥ الباقي المستحق له وهو الذي حصل إيداعه</p> <p>قرر ما هو آت :</p> <p>أستولى مديرية جرجا على أرض فدانين ١٠ وقراري ٢٣ منها السالف ذكره وأسندها إلى مصلحة عموم المساحة ما بحريرا في ٢٤ جمادى الأولى سنة ١٣٤٥ (٢٩ نوفمبر سنة ١٩٢٦)</p> <p>عنان محرم</p>	<p>قرر ما هو آت :</p> <p>أستولى مديرية جرجا على أرض فدانين ١٠ وقراري ٢٣ منها السالف ذكره وأسندها إلى مصلحة عموم المساحة ما بحريرا في ٢٤ جمادى الأولى سنة ١٣٤٥ (٢٩ نوفمبر سنة ١٩٢٦)</p> <p>عنان محرم</p>
وزارة الأشغال العمومية	
<p>قرار رقم ١٥٣ بالامتناع على ٢٨ فداناً و ٢٠ قرايط و ١٣ منها مملوكة للشيخ محمد توفيق رضوان بأحذية المعاييد (أسيوط) اعتبرت من المانع العامة لأزودها لمصلحة الآثار</p> <p>وزير الأشغال العمومية</p> <p>بعد الإطلاع على المرسوم الصادر بتاريخ ١٤ أكتوبر سنة ١٩٢٥ بأن تعتبر من المانع العامة قطعة الأرض نمرة ١ مكرز بمحوض الجاجر نمرة ٤٢ بأحذية المعايد بتمركز أنبوب بمديرية أسيوط اللازمة لمصلحة الآثار لوجود آثار قديمة بها ومساحتها ٢٨ فداناً و ٢٠ قرايط و ١٣ منها</p> <p>وعلى نسخة الشهادة الصادرة من محكمة أنبوب الجزيرة الألفية بتاريخ ٥ يونيه سنة ١٩٢٦ وملحقها الصادر بتاريخ ٢٧ أكتوبر سنة ١٩٢٦ وهما اللذان يبينان أنه أودع نزاحتها مبلغ ٣٠ جنيهاً و ١٦ ملياً قيمة الباقي من ثمن هذه المساحة بعد خصم الأقطاعات المستعقة للحكومة على الشيخ محمد توفيق رضوان حسب المين عدد :</p> <p>٧٠٩ أصل المين حسب المشرى من الحكومة (مصلحة الأوقاف الأميرية)</p> <p>٢٧ مسند لمصلحة الأوقاف الأميرية قيمة الأقطاعات الباقية على الشيخ المذكور للحكومة</p> <p>٣٠ الباقي المستحق له وهو الذي حصل إيداعه</p>	<p>قرر ما هو آت :</p> <p>أستولى مديرية جرجا على أرض فدانين ١٠ وقراري ٢٣ منها السالف ذكره وأسندها إلى مصلحة عموم المساحة ما بحريرا في ٢٤ جمادى الأولى سنة ١٣٤٥ (٢٩ نوفمبر سنة ١٩٢٦)</p> <p>عنان محرم</p>
إعلانات المصالح	
<p>الغازية العسكرية نمرة ٤٢</p> <p>بحريرا بمرکز الرئاسة بالقاهرة في ٢٨ نوفمبر سنة ١٩٢٦</p> <p>١ - قل :</p> <p>صديق على الفل الآتي اعتباراً من ٢٨ - ١١ - ١٩٢٦ :</p> <p>حضرة البوزباشي محمود أحمدى حدى طاهر من ١٠ جو أروطة بسانة إلى إدارة العيانت .</p>	<p>قرر ما هو آت :</p> <p>أستولى مديرية جرجا على أرض فدانين ١٠ وقراري ٢٣ منها السالف ذكره وأسندها إلى مصلحة عموم المساحة ما بحريرا في ٢٤ جمادى الأولى سنة ١٣٤٥ (٢٩ نوفمبر سنة ١٩٢٦)</p> <p>عنان محرم</p>

Fig. 4: The governmental Decision with expropriating 28 Feddans of al-Maabda for the sake of the Antiquities Service.

(Al-Waq'a'i al-Misriyya no. 113 for 6th December 1926, p. 7)

³⁵ Ismail, A. M. (1926) *Maamel wa Masaaney Masrya Qadeema* "Old Ancient Egyptian Factories" *Garedat Kawkab al-Sharq*, 565, p. 6

أحمد محمد اسماعيل جريدة كوكب الشرق عدد (565) 6 يوليو 1926.

³⁶ 8 Feddans = 33600 Square Meters

A. M. Ismail returned to write about the same archaeological site in 1934³⁷ but this time he invited Cairo University to excavate in this promising site; the university had successfully excavated at other sites.³⁸

However, A. M. Ismail's archaeological sophistication enabled him to realize that ancient Egyptians did not use durable materials in their secular constructions; they saved durable ones for their tombs or their religious constructions. A. M. Ismail could notice and describe unknown archaeological sites rarely visited even by archaeologists.³⁹

Ursula Rößler-Köhler carried out 2 archaeological surveys in 1980 and 1981 and published her report.⁴⁰ According to this later report, the archaeological mission defined 56 sites of particular interest; one of them seems to be the same one which A. M. Ismail mentioned in his articles. The German mission documented (in their 1980s reports) an important ancient ruined city near "Maabda" (fig. 5).⁴¹

³⁷ Ismail, A. M. (1934) *Maamel wa Masaaney Masrya Qadeema* "Ancient Egyptian Factories" al-Mokattam, 13759, p. 5.

أحمد محمد اسماعيل "معامل ومصانع مصرية قديمة" جريدة المقطم عدد (13759) 24 أبريل 1934.

³⁸ For example, at Tuna al-Gabal by Sami Gabra.

³⁹ I am so indebted to Prof. Mohamed Abdel Raheem (Faculty of Archaeology, Suhag University) who guided me to the reports of Ursula Rößler-Köhler.

⁴⁰ Zur Archäologie des 12. oberägyptischen Gaues. Bericht über zwei Surveys der Jahre 1980 und 1981".

(Gottinger Orientforschungen, IV, Reihe Ägypten, Bd. 16) Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1987; XII, 299 pp., 17 plates, 152 ill., 10 maps.

⁴¹ Schenkel, Wolfgang Ursula Rößler-Köhler, The Archaeology of the 12th Nome of Upper Egypt. Report of Two Surveys in 1980 and 1981, Mandus, 25 (1989), pp. 29-30.

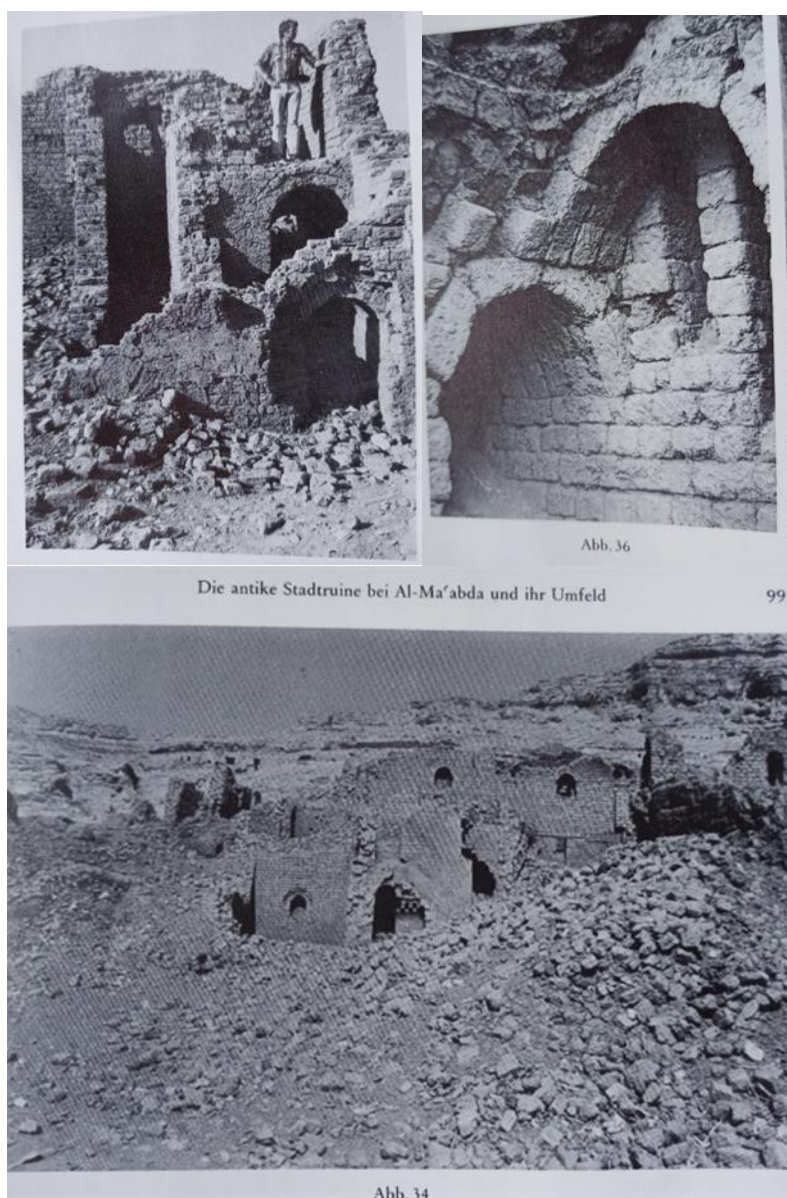


Fig. 5: Abnub Excavations of the 1980s corresponding to A. M. Ismail's description in the 1920s
Fig. 34,35,36: Kurth and Rößler-Köhler, 12. oberägyptischer Gau.

For the same archaeological site, in the 1920s, A. M. Ismail drew, in his articles, a plan to benefit the local community, whose search for manure (*Sebakh*) has ruined the western part of this archaeological site. Ismail suggested: “...*The Antiquities Department should remove this soil and sell it to the local people. In this process, all the buildings will be visible and can then be added to the other archaeological sites that are visited (through tourist programs) by thousands of tourists every year....*”⁴²

⁴² Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 155.

10. “Le Partage” from A. M. Ismail’s point of view

A. M. Ismail described how the Asyut Museum of Sayed Khashaba, in the 1910s, was formed depending on the division system⁴³ which used to grant the excavator part of the archaeological finds: “*He (Ahmed Kamal) used to divide what he found of antiquities in two halves, the first used to be sent to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and the second was given to the excavator Sayed Khashaba who utilized and deposited his share of the antiquities in the museum he set up in Asyut....*”

A rare piece (fig. 6) was excavated in 1910, at Mesra (Meir). A. M. Ismail mentioned that Ahmed Kamal found it in the excavations funded by Sayed Khashaba. German Egyptologist examined and estimated it at LE 10,000, an invaluable piece. Kamal preferred this piece to go to the Egyptian Museum's share in the division of Khashaba's excavations finds and did not give it to his friend, the sponsor of the excavations, Sayed Khashaba.

A. M. Ismail blamed Kamal for not giving the rare piece to Khashaba “*...to sell and fund more excavations...*”. Kamal defended his decision by declaring the piece so rare that it must be kept in Egypt.⁴⁴ Maspero used the same argument when accused of granting Khashaba the concession for excavation and depending on Ahmad Kamal to oversee and describe the excavation.⁴⁵ He found this find a very satisfying result of Khashaba’s excavations at Meir.⁴⁶



Fig. 6: An unusual wand admired and described by A. M. Ismail. It is a blackened wooden cane inlaid in silver with an inscription by one of the pharaohs of the 9th Dynasty.

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11. A. M. Ismail congratulates Selim Hassan of his discovery of the “Fourth Pyramid” at Giza

In 1932 A. M. Ismail published an article in *al-Ahram*⁴⁷ congratulating the archaeologist Selim Hassan on his discovery of the “fourth pyramid” at Giza: “*...I congratulate Selim Hassan on his recent discovery of the Fourth Pyramid, a discovery that has no parallel in modern history, and I wish him continued success...*” Responding to A. M. Ismail’s

⁴³ “Le Partage” or the division of the archaeological finds into 2 parts, one for the excavator and the other for the Antiquities Service’s administration which used to dwell these pieces either in the magazines or in the museums.

⁴⁴ Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, pp. 188-189.

⁴⁵ Abdel Rahman, Hend Mohamed the Khashaba Museum (1910s-1960s), EDAL Egyptian & Egyptological Documents Archives Libraries, Vol. 8, 2019, pp. 58-109.

⁴⁶ Institute de France, Fonds Maspero, ms 4052, folio 78-87.

⁴⁷ Ismail, A. M. (1932) *Tahnea Be Kashf Athary* “Congratulations for archaeological excavation” *al-Ahram*, 16960, p. 5.

أحمد محمد اسماعيل، "تهنئة بكشف أثرى" الأهرام عدد 16960، 24 فبراير 1932.

congratulations, the magazine *Rose al-Yousef* criticized Egyptians for not following up on this in the Arabic press. This might lead newspaper readers both in Egypt and abroad to assume that Ismail's congratulations were the only ones Selim Hassan received from his compatriots. For Egyptians (including A. M. Ismail), recognition of Selim Hassan was probably more important than the excavation of Giza's "fourth pyramid" itself in Feb. 1932 (fig. 7).



الرئيس الجليل مصطفى باشا النحاس ومكرم عبيد ومحمود عزاز رئيس الجامعة العربية أثناء مشاهدتهم اكتشاف سليم حسن الهرم الرابع عام ١٩٣٢

Fig. 7: Egypt's prime minister Mostafa al-Nahhas visits the site of Giza's fourth pyramid (1932).

"الهرم الرابع يستحق ركوب الحمير"

The fourth pyramid is worth a ride on 'donkeys'!

Courtesy: Samir Al-Ghazouli archive

al-Ahram, no.48059, 6/7/2018

By hailing Selim Hassan's achievement, Ismail went beyond his previous recognition of his late friend Ahmed Kamal as the only outstanding Egyptian archaeologist. Impressed by Selim Hassan's excavation, A. M. Ismail now expanded his vision to include a younger generation of Egyptians who had followed Kamal's lead.

In the entire volume which Selim Hassan published on the discovery of the Fourth Pyramid, almost everything, on the frontispiece (fig. 8), was Egyptian; the names of the discoverers, the sponsoring university, and even the government press at Bulaq that did the printing.

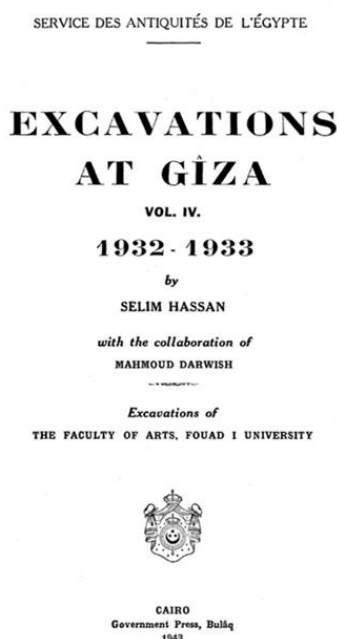


Fig. 8: The frontispiece of the publication on the Fourth Pyramid at Giza by Egyptian excavators, Egyptian sponsors (The Faculty of Arts, Fouad I University), and printed on the Government Press, Bulaq).

Although this term (fourth pyramid) did not originate with Selim Hassan's discovery of the *Khent Kaos*⁴⁸ pyramid in 1932,⁴⁹ but it remained associated with this discovery and was used in all newspapers inside and outside Egypt,⁵⁰ the “fourth pyramid” term expressed the pride of Egyptians’ access to the field of archaeological excavations at last.

Rose al-Yousef magazine also⁵¹ published: “...Every Egyptian felt proud of Selim Hassan discovery... We, as Egyptians hope that instead of one tomb, Selim Hassan will

⁴⁸ Queen Khent-kaws was a sovereign in her own right and was fully entitled to be called King of Upper and Lower Egypt, in spite of the fact that she bore no Horus title (so far discovered), and did not enclose her name in a cartouche. (Hassan, Selim 1943, p. 3).

⁴⁹ The “Fourth Pyramid” was used, metaphorically, to give certain destination or person considerable importance.

⁵⁰ For example, in:

- Associated Press (February 18, 1932, Page 23) “Foundations of Fourth Pyramidare brought to Light at Gizeh..... Egyptian Univ. Expedition discovers foundations of a 4th pyramid at Gizeh”.
- Paris-Soir (March 05, 1932, Page 4) La Quatrième Pyramide.
- The Times, (February 18, 1932, page 11) A Fourth Pyramid at Giza.

⁵¹ *Rose al-Youssef* (1932), no. 212, p. 43

uncover two tombs, and tens of pyramids.... so that the forty centuries of which Bonaparte spoke will look at us from the top of forty pyramids.”⁵²

Conclusions

Although A. M. Ismail was a religious figure who was formed in the countryside of Asyut with the turn of the 19th century. He was *Sheikh Kottab* “supervisor of religious class” and did not work in archaeology, but his passion for ancient Egypt, Egyptology & hieroglyphs led him to devote much of his writings to comment on events related to archaeological work, during the first half of the twentieth century, in Egypt. His language and religious culture influenced his vocabulary; he referred to the Deir al-Moallaq as the “Mausoleum of El-Moallaq”, the tomb of Pepi-Ankh as “*Madfan Pepi-Ankh*”, and the stela as “*Sahifat al-Qabr*”.

He deplored that education in Egyptology was mostly available in European languages and passionately advocated that it be offered in Arabic too.

A. M. Ismail recognized the achievements of many archeologists. He hailed Champollion as “the one who opened the closed book of hieroglyphs” and argued for Egyptian participation in hailing this breakthrough. His admiration of Champollion shines through in many of his articles even though he also believed that Egypt’s colonization by Europeans long delayed Egyptians’ opportunities to learn Egyptology.

A. M. Ismail also described Gaston Maspero as “the unrivaled expert in the field of Egyptology.’

Ismail accompanied Blackman in the tombs of Mier and recorded their conversation in his articles.

From the beginning of the 20th century, he advocated popularizing the study of hieroglyphs and ancient Egypt, thus showing Egyptian interest in studying their ancient history well before the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb in 1922.

After Ahmed Kamal’s death in 1922, A. M. Ismail’s vision expanded to include young generations of Egyptian Egyptologists, including Ahmed Naguib and those Egyptians who studied Egyptology in Europe, such as Sami Gabra, Selim Hassan, and Georgy Sobhy.

A. M. Ismail called for the establishment of a museum in each governorate to house the discovered artefacts in that region. Ismail considered Khashaba Museum in Asyut to be a model that should be emulated.

Although A. M. Ismail considered Ahmed Kamal the *Imam* (Leader) of the native archaeologists, he later listed others who followed in his footsteps, including Selim Hassan, whom he described as Ahmed Kamal’s student.

⁵² Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, pp. 228-229.

A. M. Ismail was among the many to praise Selim Hassan's achievements and his archaeological discoveries at Giza. This later praise expressed Egyptians' on-going struggle, especially after the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, to allow Europeans to continue to direct Egypt's Antiquities Service.

Although more than a century has passed since A. M. Ismail began publishing his articles on archaeology, his far-sighted vision may still be seen in reading these articles today.

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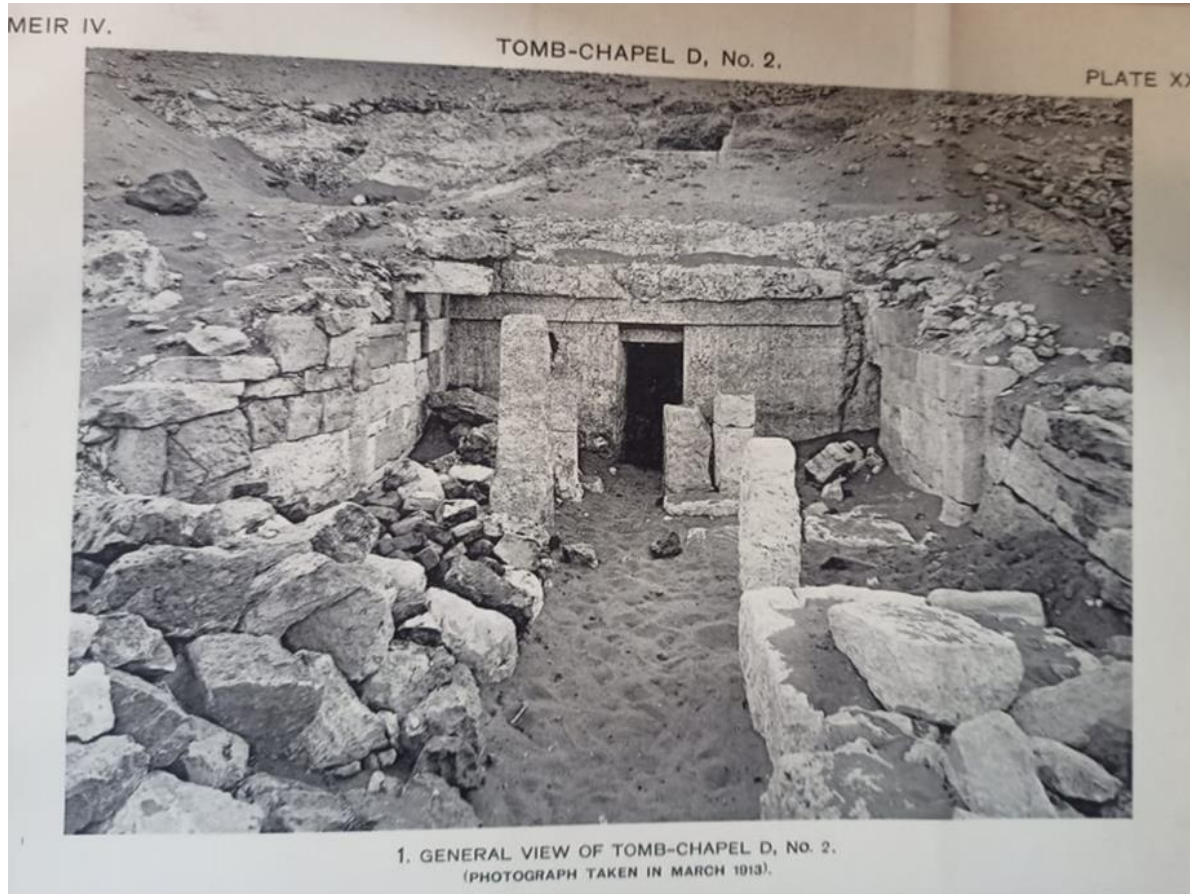
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Appendix. 1

Scenes of Pepi-Ankh tomb Meir-Asyut as described by A. M. Ismail



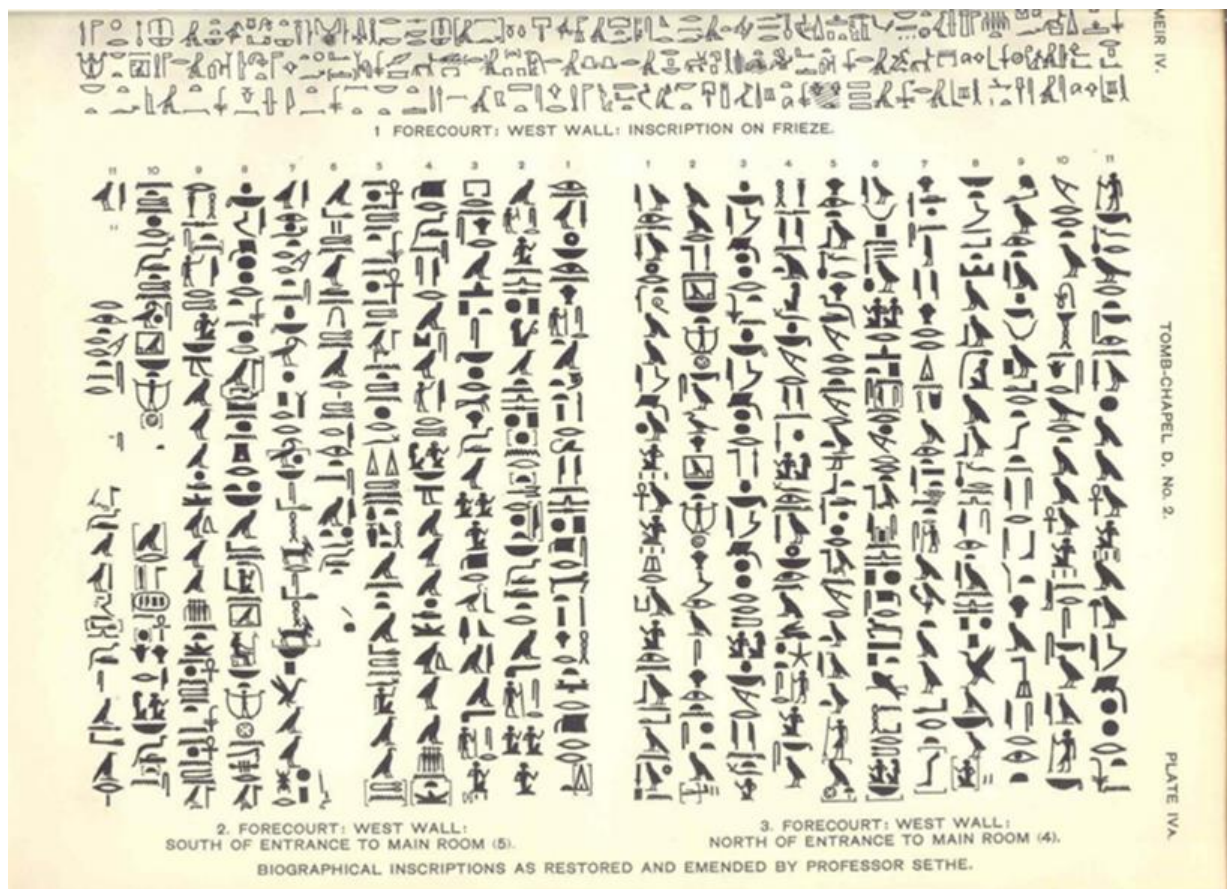
Blackman, IV, 1924 (pl. 22)

“..... In front of it is a court almost as large as the tomb, but time has taken its toll, removing the stone roof, changing its features and then covering it with sand....”

”وأمامه حوش يقرب منه في الاتساع، غير أن الزمان قد سطا عليه، فأزال السقف الحجري وغير معالمه ثم غطاه بالرمال”

(Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 98.)

(2)



Blackman, IV, 1924 (pl. 22) p. 73.

“.... a hieroglyphic inscription was written on the outside of its door, containing praises of its owner, as if it were the title of book....”

".... كتب على بابه من الخارج بالحفر كتابة (هيروغليفية) تحتوي على مدائح في صاحبه، كأنها لما حواه ذلك المدفن في الداخل من المناظر والهيئات عنوانا لكتاب"

(Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 98.)

(3)



Blackman IV, 1924, Main Room North wall (10)

“...On the northern wall there is a drawing of the owner and his wife sitting on a chair, and between them is a large table with hieroglyphic writing above the table showing the types of food served on it, and below it, below the man is a drawing of four pots placed on a chair, and below his wife are two jugs and two bowls also on a chair.”

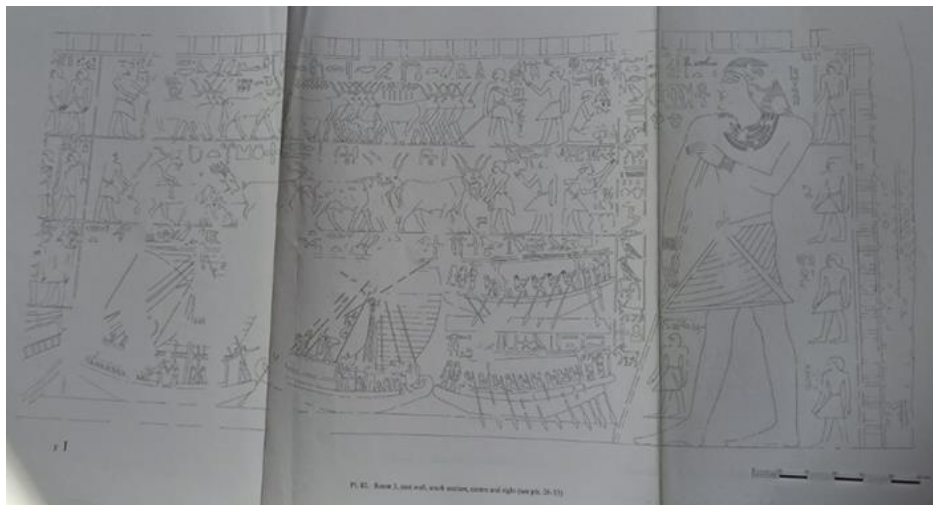
"يوجد على الحائط البحرية رسم صاحبه ورسم امرأته جالسين، كل منهما على كرسي، وبينهما شكل مائدة كبيرة وفوق تلك المائدة كتابة هيروغليفية تبين أنواع الأطعمة المقدمة عليها، وتحتها مما يلي الرجل رسم 4 قلال موضوعة على كرسي، ومما يلي امرأته إيريقان وطشتان على كرسي أيضا"

(Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, pp. 98-99)

(4)



Kanawati, 2012 (Pl. 26) East wall



“On the eastern wall of the door is a drawing of a man standing on the ground watches catching birds from cultivated lands and catching fish from the Nile with nets, and sometimes he appears on the boats to catch fish and birds himself. This is followed by a number of scenes, some of which represent ships sailing up and down the Nile, and some of which represent large animals presented to Pepi-Ankh, with a man in front of him dictating to the kneeling scribe, and another man behind them”

” يوجد على الحائط الشرقية، التي بها الباب رسم الرجل واقفا تارة على الأرض يراقب حركات صيد الطيور من المزرعات والأسماك من النيل بواسطة الشباك، وتارة على الزوارق لصيد الأسماك والطيور بنفسه. ثم يلي ذلك جملة أشكال، بعضها يمثل سفنا ماخرة في النيل بين صعود وانحدار، وبعضها يمثل حيوانات كبيرة معروضة عليه يتقدمها رجل ليمليها على الكاتب الراكع أمامه، وخلفهما رجل آخر.“

(Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 99)

(5)



South wall, west section Kanawati, 2012 (pl. 34)

“West section of the south wall is occupied by the figures of the tomb owner and his parents.”

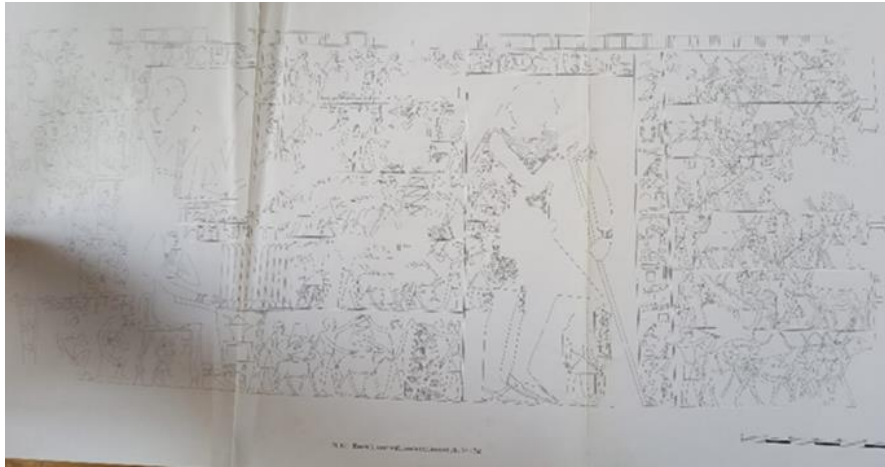
(Kanawati, 2012, p. 45)

"يوجد على الحائط القبليّة، منظرا يمثله هو ووالده وأمه جالس كل منهم على كرسي، وبين يديه مائدته، وتحتها القلل والطشت والإبريق".

“On the southern wall, A scene depicting him, his father and his mother, each sitting on a chair, with his table touched by his hands, and underneath them; water jugs, the basin and the ewer.”

(Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 99)

(6)



West wall south section (Kanawati 2012, pl. 84)

On the west wall the harvesting scenes. (Kanawati, 2012, p. 48)

"يوجد على الحائط الغربية رسمه جالسا يتفقد أحوال زراعته أثناء ضمها ونقلها على الحمير، ثم درسها بأرجلها، ثم حملها حبا"

On the west wall, there is a scene of Pepi-Ankh sitting and inspecting his crops as they are gathered and transported on donkeys, then threshed with their feet, then carried by donkeys

(Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 99)



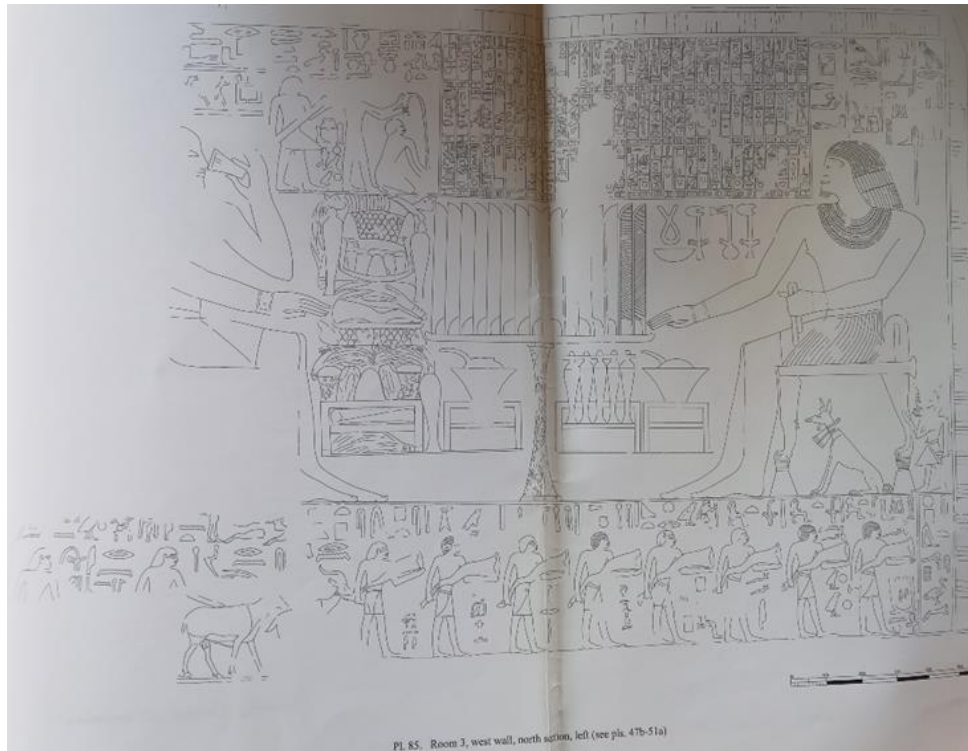
Kanawati, 2012, (pl. 42) (b) Detail

Ploughing by the cows and ploughers that exactly looks like the contemporaneous ones.

"...ثم يلي ذلك منظر حرث الأرض على البقر بمحاريث لا تختلف عن محاريثنا الحاضرة شيئا..."

(Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 99)

(7)



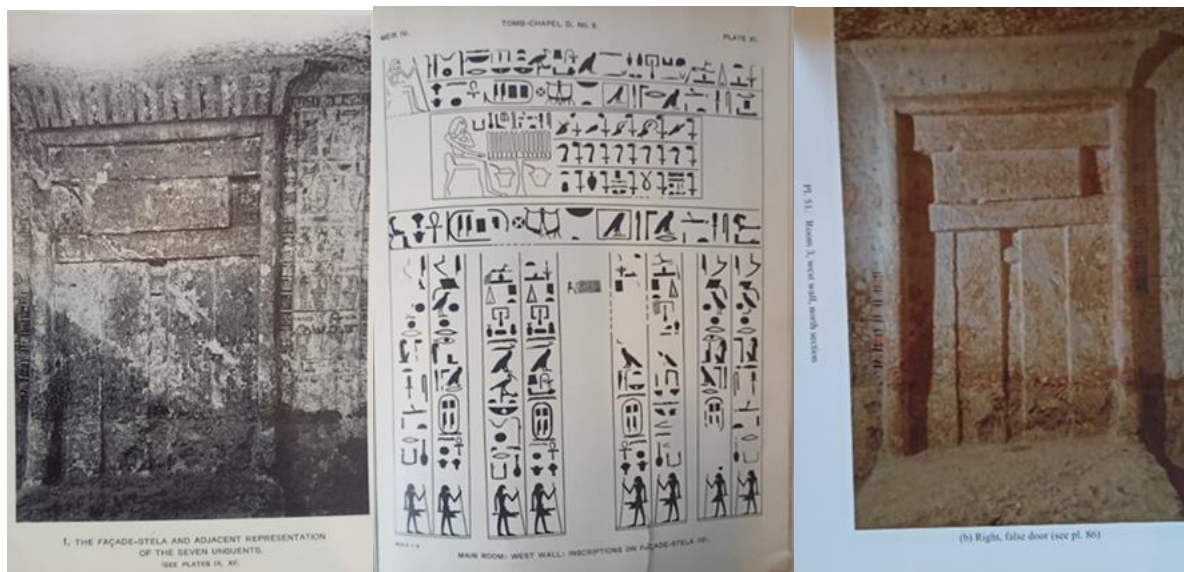
West wall, north section left, Kanawati, 2012 (pl. 185)

According to A. M. Ismail “*the tomb owner sits in front of his relative with their hounds under their chairs*” (Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 99)

"...ثم يلي ذلك منظرا يمثله هو وقريب له جالسين كل منهم على كرسي بينهما مائدة وتحت كرسي كل منهما كلب صيد، وفوق تلك المائدة كتابة تدل على أنواع الأطعمة..."

The two figures are for the tomb's owner (Kanawati, 2012, p. 53)

(8)



(1.) Blackman,1924, Pl. XXVI

(2.) Blackman,1924, Pl. XI

(3.) Kanawati,2012 Pl. 51. (b)

"...ثم يلي ذلك صحيفة القبر..."

(Manuscript of A. M. Ismail memoirs, p. 99)

"*Sahifat al-Qabr*" according to A. M. Ismail (1913)

"Façade-Stela" according to Blackman (1924)

"False door" according to Kanawati (2012)

مصر القديمة في كتابات أحمد محمد إسماعيل 1912-1934

هند محمد عبد الرحمن

قسم الإرشاد السياحي، كلية السياحة والفنادق، جامعة المنيا

الملخص

لقد شغل علم المصريات أذهان الكثير من المثقفين المصريين الذين اختلفت مواقفهم من تعلم علم المصريات باختلاف نشأتهم وبيئتهم وتعليمهم. وكان من بينهم الشيخ أحمد محمد إسماعيل، وهو شيخ كتاب من محافظة أسيوط، كتب العديد من المقالات عن علم المصريات ودعا إلى تدريس الهيروغليفية في المدارس المصرية. كما زار المواقع الأثرية ووصفها في مقالاته. تظهر ثقافته الصعيدية الإقليمية وتعليمه الديني في وصفه لهذه المواقع الأثرية. وقد أوضح اهتمام الغرب بعلم المصريات وحاجة المصريين المعاصرين إلى التعلم منها. يبحث هذا المقال في ملامح مصر القديمة في فكر و كتابات أحمد محمد إسماعيل واقتراحاته لتطوير تعليم علم المصريات بين أبناء بلده.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مصر القديمة، الشيخ الامير، أحمد محمد اسماعيل، المعابد، مير، أسيوط، الهيروغليفية.