

## URIMELLIS

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In R.S. O'Fahey and J. L. Spaulding, *Kingdoms of the Sudan* (London 1974, 121), O'Fahey presents a translation of a reference to Darfur from the seventeenth century. The translation is from Johann Michael Wansleb's *Beschreibung Aegyptens im Jahr 1664*. This was published by J.D. Rueuss in the series, *Sammlung der merkwürdigsten Reisen in den Orient*, Part 3, ed. H.E.G. Paulus, Jena 1794. This is a printed version of the original manuscript which Wansleb sent to Duke Ernst I of Gotha. The Duke had financed Wansleb's journey to Egypt, but on his return from the Middle East Wansleb stayed in Rome and in 1666 became a Dominican. An Italian edition of his manuscript was published as *Relatione della Stato Presente dell'Egitto*, Florence 1670, and a French edition followed in 1671.

The German edition, however, seems to adhere more closely to the original manuscript than the other two versions, if we may trust its editor, Reuss. Wansleb undertook a second journey, this time on behalf of the French king to Egypt in 1672-3, during which he collected many books and manuscripts. His report on this journey is also published in the *Sammlung* as *Neue Beschreibung einer Reise nach Aegypten in den Jahren 1672-1673 in Form eines Tagebuches verfasst von P. Wansleb* (pp. 125-384).<sup>1</sup> A

1 There is some confusion about Wansleb's name; in the original manuscript he is called Wansleben. Later he was known as Wansleb or Vansleb. He was born at Frankenhausen, near Erfurt and was a pupil of the famous scholar of Ethiopia, Hiob Ludolphus. Two works that are relevant are A. Pougeois, *Vansleb, savant orientaliste et voyageur. Sa vie, sa disgrâce, ses oeuvres*. Paris 1869, and H. Omont, *Missions archæologiques françaises en Orient aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, 2 vols., Paris 1902.

French version was published as *Nouvelle Relation d’Egypte*, Paris 1677.<sup>2</sup>

In O’Fahey’s translation of this early reference to Darfur, the name of then alleged ruler is given as ‘Urizmellis’ residing at ‘Ogra’. Neither of these two names can be identified with any certainty, although an identification with Uri, a hilltop ‘palace’ site in northern Darfur, may be suggested by ‘Ogra’. Uri is said to have been the capital of the Tunjur kingdom.<sup>3</sup> This suggestion of O’Fahey’s may be further strengthened. By checking the translation with the original I discovered that the correct name is ‘Urimellis’, the inserted ‘z’ being a reading error. The name is situated at the end of a line and the beginning of the next and separated by a double hyphen which in Gothic type resembles a ‘z’. Thus the first name should be read as ‘Urimellis’.

2 On which see, L. Keimer, ‘Certains voyageurs européens venus en Egypte’, *Bulletin de l’Institut de l’Egypte*, xxxi, 1948-9, 121-75.

3 See further, H.G. Balfour-Paul, *History and Antiquities of Darfur*, Sudan Antiquities Service, Museum Pamphlet no. 3, Khartoum 1955, 11.