

John Greaves,
Pyramidographia
and Other Writings,
with Birch's *Life of*
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Edited with an Introduction and Notes by
John Anthony Butler

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This book is dedicated to Sylvia,
with love.

“To her let us garlands bring.”



John Greaves. Engraving by Edward Mascall, 1650.¹ Wikimedia Commons.

¹ Edward Mascall (c.1627-1683) was a portrait artist and engraver about whom very little is known apart from the fact that he worked in the 1650s. Portraits of prominent public figures by Mascall include those of Oliver Cromwell and General George Monck.

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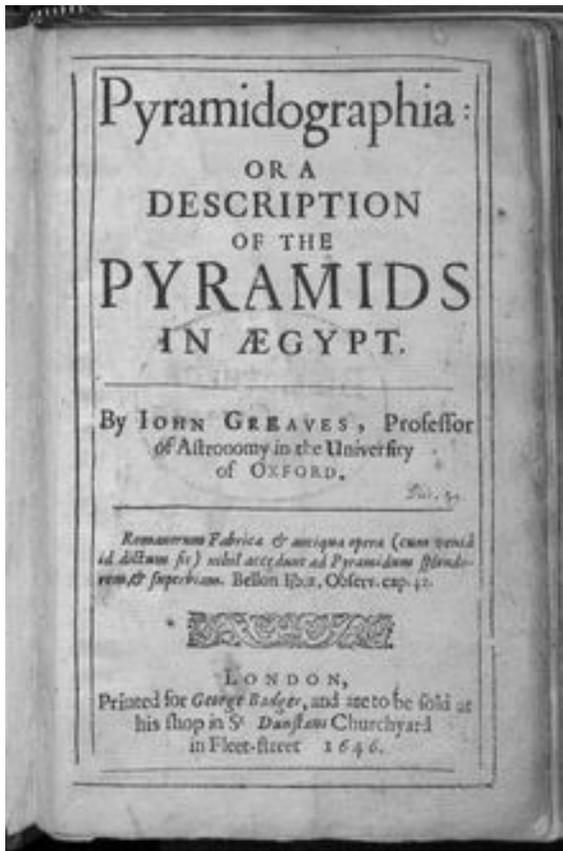
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INTRODUCTION

Prologue: Wonderment and Science

Egypt is the image of heaven. Moreover, it is the dwelling-place of heaven and all the forces that are in heaven.

—Hermes Trismegistus, “Asclepius,” 21-29.



Title-Page of the first edition of *Pyramidographia*, 1646. Wikimedia Commons.

There are no extant records of who was the first person to visit the pyramids at Giza as either a traveller or tourist, but the ancient structures must have seemed more than worthy of their designation as one of the wonders of the world, their vastness and isolation in the desert landscape overwhelming and dwarfing him. The sense of incredulity which that first visitor must have felt gazing at them survives in anyone who sees them today, for even with the great metropolis of modern Cairo looming against the polluted background, it is the pyramids that one sees, nothing much else. Somehow the skyscrapers of Cairo and even the minarets of its beautiful mosques are merely background to these awe-inspiring structures. Amelia Edwards, who visited Egypt in 1874, captured the vastness of the Great Pyramid: “in all its unexpected bulk and majesty,” she wrote, it “towers above one’s head. The effect is sudden and overwhelming. It shuts out the sky and horizon. It shuts out all the other pyramids. It shuts out everything but the sense of awe and wonder.”² In 1908 Pierre Loti, who admittedly had a habit of converting reality into fantasy, elevated the pyramids into “three apocalyptic signs. . . rose coloured triangles, regular as the figures of geometry, but so vast in the distance that they inspire you with fear.”³ Tourists, noisily insistent cheap souvenir-sellers and guides with their bad-tempered camels are now an integral part of the scene, but in essence the pyramids themselves remain, more or less, the way they were when Herodotus saw them or when Napoleon’s troops (at least that’s the urban legend—it was probably the Turks or Mamluks) took pot-shots at the nearby Great Sphinx’s nose. They sit, defiantly, on the ever-shifting sands, blissfully ignorant of elemental forces or of modern business, monuments to the power of human ingenuity and labour, the largest and most impressive structures of the ancient world, the sole survivors of the Seven Wonders of the World. “Change seizes all those things/ Men hold immortal;” the seventeen-year old Rupert Brooke

² Amelia B. Edwards, *A Thousand Miles up the Nile*, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 1891), 15. Amelia Edwards (1831-1892) was a British novelist and journalist. She was also co-founder (1882) of the Egypt Exploration Fund, the present-day Egypt Exploration Society.

³ Pierre Loti, *Egypt (La mort de Philae)*, trans. W. P. Baines (New York: Duffield and Co., 1909), 3. Loti (1850-1923), a naval officer whose real name was Louis Viaud, was a well-known French novelist and traveller. He is famed for his romantic works of fiction and his “orientalism,” and spent a great deal of time in Istanbul.

wrote in 1904, “yet do these remain,/ Immutable, voiceless, lonely in their age,/ Grey with the dust that once was kings.”⁴

Not everyone was so impressed with the pyramids; Pliny the Elder, following Herodotus’s oft-expressed belief in the *hubris* of the mighty, complained that they were merely an example of the vanity of tyrants. The poet Shelley, no doubt, would have put them in the same category as the ruined statue of Ozymandias, an example of the power time has over human fame as “the lone and level sands stretch far away.” Sir Thomas Browne had further words to say on the subject of time and human vanity as personified by the pyramids, turning these very metaphors of immortality into metaphors of time and change:

Time sadly overcometh all things, and is now dominant and sitteth upon a sphinx, while his sister Oblivion reclineth semisomnous upon a pyramid. . . turning old glories into dreams. History sinketh beneath her cloud. The traveller, as he passeth amazedly through these deserts, asketh of her, who buildeth them? And she mumbleth something, but what it is he heareth not.⁵

And the same writer, whose library contained a copy of *Pyramidographia*, in once again dismissing the metaphor of the pyramids as an antidote for mutability and the ravages of time, remarked gravely, “to subsist in bones, and be but pyramidically extant, is a fallacy in duration. . . Who can but pity the founders of the pyramids?”⁶ Yet they are still, *pace* Browne, a metaphor for endurance and timelessness, because they are there. Both Pliny and Shelley are gone, themselves premature victims, ironically, of Nature’s power, that selfsame power which has yet to overthrow the pyramids, although it has, with some assistance from time, humans and sand, done some damage to them. The poet and traveller George Sandys, viewing the pyramids in 1610, also saw the pyramids as symbols of how man could defy the ravages of time; the Great Pyramid was, for him, “too great a morsel for Time to devour, having stood, as may probably be

⁴ Rupert Brooke, “The Pyramids,” in *The Poetical Works*, ed. Sir Geoffrey Keynes (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), 190. The year of his death (1915), Brooke passed through Egypt on his way to Gallipoli, and caught dysentery as well as sunburn. His mother had the poem printed in 1904, when Brooke was seventeen and had never been to Egypt.

⁵ Sir Thomas Browne, “Fragment on Mummies,” <http://penelope.uchicago.edu>.

⁶ Sir Thomas Browne, *Hydriotaphia*, chapter 5, in *The Major Works*, ed. C. A. Patrides (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), 308.

conjectured, about 3200 years, and now rather old than ruinous.”⁷ And finally, in our own day we find Daniel Boorstin asserting confidently that “the ancient Egyptians have won their battle against time. We wonder that monuments elsewhere outlast the centuries, but the Egyptian world seems changeless.”⁸

When a young Oxford don, John Greaves, coming to Egypt on the heels of many distinguished predecessors, first saw the pyramids in 1638, he must surely have felt their “might” too, although he claimed, somewhat disingenuously, that all he wanted to do was measure them, to find out who built them and why— a purely scientific endeavour. If John Greaves sought fame at all, it was as scholar and mathematician, but he also wrote for the love of what he did and because a study of the structures with modern technology could, he believed, yield answers to age-old questions about metrology. Could the pyramids be, for Greaves, perhaps, “a model of the earth,” and might they even contain “standards of measure based upon a knowledge of the circumference of the earth?”⁹ Building on available sources, which included classical, medieval and modern writers, Greaves hoped to arrive eventually at a definitive description of the pyramids using state-of-the-art instruments and a purely scientific methodology; as he himself put it, he wanted to achieve “the fixing of measures for posterity.” An anonymous eighteenth-century writer observed that Greaves was “travelling. . .with designs as great as those of Pythagoras, Plato or any of the ancient Greek Philosophers, who went there [Egypt] in search of knowledge.”¹⁰ He would never have suggested that the pyramids had any magical or mysterious meaning, that they were erected by space aliens or by a long-vanished superior race of people; for him, they were the tombs of ancient Egyptian rulers, nothing more, nothing less (as Herodotus had believed), and they were constructed by real human beings with whom he could connect through his scientific

⁷ George Sandys. *Sandys Travels: Containing an History of the Original and Present State of the Turkish Empire, the Mahometan Religion and Ceremonies, A Description of Constantinople, also Of Greece, with the Religions and Customs of the Grecians, Of Egypt, the Antiquity, Hieroglyphicks, Rites, Customs, Discipline, and Religion of the Egyptians.* . .The Seventh Edition (London, 1673; LaVergne, TN: Nabu Reprints, 2013), 98.

⁸ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Creators: A History of Heroes of the Imagination* (New York: Random House, 1992), 79.

⁹ John Anthony West, *The Traveller’s Key to Ancient Egypt: A Guide to the Sacred Places of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 33.

¹⁰ Jacob Robinson, ed. *History of the Works of the Learned, or The Present State of the Republic of Letters*, Vol. 1 (London: T. Cooper, 1740; repr. Charleston, NC: Nabu Press, 2012), 416.

studies and whose long-ago skills in measurement might provide him with a foundation upon which he might build to possibly standardise modern measures and discover the origins of western measurement.

The pyramids did not rise spontaneously from the sand like the walls of Troy when the gods erected them for king Laomedon; they were a great human endeavour, a physical and tangible link to a remote past about which little for certain was known outside ancient writings which no-one could decipher, second-hand historical accounts and modern speculation. It was important to Greaves that Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus and other writers of antiquity had actually seen the pyramids, experienced them, touched them and even smelt them, or at least the bad air inside them; he was following in their footsteps and was their modern successor using modern knowledge. In a letter to Greaves, his friend John Hales, a theologian who had served as Archbishop Laud's chaplain, compared him to Johann Herwart von Hohenburg, one scholar who, Hales believed, had tried "to take off from the founders of those stupendous buildings the folly and madness which the common judgment of the world hath stuck upon them."¹¹ One example of "folly and madness," Hales wrote, was "that these pyramids were designed for observatories," a theory which has prevailed all the way to our own times, and which, Hales wrote, "is in no way to be credited."¹² Greaves's attitude towards the pyramids and his

¹¹ Johann Georg Herwart von Hohenburg (1553-1622) was a mathematician, astronomer, philologist and chronologer who also held the post of Chancellor of Bavaria. A correspondent of Kepler and Tycho Brahe, Herwart extended his patronage and protection to many other men of learning. His *Thesaurum hieroglyphicorum* (1610) was the only book of its time to reproduce authentic Egyptian inscriptions, and his descriptions of monuments were largely accurate and thoroughly-researched. He is often considered as a pioneer Egyptologist. For further details, see Patrick J. Boner, "Statesman and Scholar: Herwart von Hohenburg as Patron and Author in the Republic of Letters," *History of Science* (2014): 29-51.

¹² Greaves's remarks have aroused some controversy. He attributed the observatory theory to Proclus, in the latter's *Commentary on Timaeus*, but he may have misinterpreted what Proclus meant or even set him up as a straw man. Proclus certainly wrote about the Egyptians as astronomers, but he did not say that the pyramids served as their instruments. For details, see Jason Colavito, "Revisiting Proclus and the Pyramids; or, the Case of the Copycat Authors," <http://www.jasoncolavito.com>. Sir Walter Raleigh also believed them to be observatories, but seems to have based his opinion on a misreading of Pierre Belon, who said they were tombs (Wortham, *Genesis*, 6).

The observatory theory was taken up at length by some of Napoleon's scholars and later by the distinguished astronomer Richard Proctor in *The Great Pyramid: Observatory, Tomb and Temple* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1883). There may

methods make him a genuine Egyptologist, not just a “pyramidologist,”¹³ and of English ones he was, without a doubt, the earliest. Greaves’s Victorian admirer Piazzi Smyth, the erstwhile Astronomer Royal of Scotland and himself a seasoned traveller in Egypt as well as an advocate of some rather strange theories about pyramids, observed with a little gentle hyperbole that “living before the full birth of European science, but on the edge of an horizon which is eventful in scientific history; with an unusual knowledge, too, of Oriental languages, and a taste for travelling. . . Greaves belongs almost to the heroic time.”¹⁴ His book on the pyramids, according to John Baines and Jaromír Málek, “was more penetrating than any other of its time on ancient Egypt.”¹⁵

None of the above is to suggest, even for a moment, that visitors to Egypt before Greaves did not contribute in their own way to the genuine knowledge which was available to those interested in the subject during

well have been an actual observatory near the Third Pyramid, but no evidence that the building itself was anything other than a tomb. For details see Sherif el Morsi and Antoine Gikal, “The Menkaure Stellar Observatory,”

<http://www.gigalresearch.com.uk>.

Another nineteenth-century idea, this one from John Taylor in *The Great Pyramid, Why Was It Built? And Who Built It?* (1859) was that the pyramids were instruments for measuring the earth. Piazzi Smyth, who admired Taylor’s work and dedicated his own book on the Great Pyramid to him, also thought that the standard British inch was somehow derived from Egyptian measurements and the Biblical cubit used in the making of Noah’s ark. Smyth then departed even further from science in order to demonstrate “that the chambers and passages of the pyramid were a God-inspired record, a prophecy in stone of the great events in world history” (Lehner, *Complete Pyramids*, 57). In our own time, Immanuel Velikovsky (often derided as a “fringe” scientist) has speculated that the pyramids were actually shelters built for the king and his court to protect them from natural disasters, an idea which supported his widely-controversial theory of geological catastrophism caused by close contact with other planets. For details, see

<http://www.varchive.org>.

¹³ Pyramidology, which includes most of the theories discussed above, is now considered a fringe or pseudo science, although it has persisted into the twenty-first century. See, for example, Martin Gardner, *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science* (New York: Dover Books, 1957), 173ff. Gardner states that “it was not until 1859 [the publication of Taylor’s book] that modern pyramidology was born” (174).

¹⁴ Piazzi Smyth, *The Great Pyramid: Its Secrets and Mysteries Revealed* (New York: Gramercy Books [1880], 1978), 137. Gardner considers Smyth even more bizarre with his measurements than Taylor (*Fads and Fallacies*, 176ff.).

¹⁵ John Baines and Jaromír Málek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Phaidon Books, 1986), 24.

the early seventeenth century. Unfortunately for scholars, this was inevitably mixed with a great deal of hearsay, legends, exaggerations and every conceivable form of inaccuracy, from the names of Egyptian rulers to the descriptions of what was inside the pyramids, and it was difficult to distinguish truth from legend. The Greeks, Romans and Persians had all conquered the country, and with the early and very rapid expansion of Islam after the death of Muhammad in 632 the Arabs followed them. Each culture interpreted or even reinvented Egypt in its own way, and the Europeans who began to arrive from the latter part of the twelfth century, when Benjamin of Tudela was there in the 1160s, were no exception to this rule. Legends piled upon legends, and many proved as enduring as the pyramids themselves. By the time John Greaves came on the scene, he had a plethora of accounts from all kinds of sources, some of which had been translated into English, others not. Greaves was a more than competent linguist, reading Arabic and Persian in addition to Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and Italian, citing authorities from each one of these languages in his writings. In addition, Greaves knew some interesting people with opinions and observations about Egypt who included travellers and diplomats, as well as non-mainstream intellectuals such as Athanasius Kircher, who was working on some very bizarre theories about hieroglyphics. All these contributions made Greaves's task more difficult or actually easier, depending upon which way one looked at them.

Greaves thus had access to a great deal of what had been thought and said by scholars and travellers about Egypt from the earliest times to his own age. He was probably familiar, too, with some of the literary allusions to Egypt's most renowned structures. If Greaves had been a theatre-goer he could have heard Shakespeare's Cleopatra declare just before her death, "Rather make/ My country's high pyramids my grave,"¹⁶ or Marlowe's Dido, desperately pleading with Aeneas to stay with her, offering to repair his ships and promising that "the masts, whereon thy swelling sails shall hang," will be decked with "hollow pyramids of silver plate."¹⁷ Greaves

¹⁶ William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* 5, 2, in Orgel and Braunmuller, eds. *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*. We might also note that Shakespeare thought Cleopatra's pyramid would have had a window.

¹⁷ Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* 3, 1, 121-22, in *The Complete Plays*, ed. Frank Romany and Robert Lindsey (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 32. John Wortham seems to think that Marlowe meant that the pyramids of Egypt were hollow, but the context suggests that Dido is here using "pyramids" to denote shape (or even meaning "obelisks," as Romany and Lindsey believe), rather than making strange claims about the Egyptian monuments. There was often confusion

was even mentioned by name in a poem by the earl of Westmorland: “And severall Parishes and Touns amidst/ Known and distinguisht by their Pyramids/ That Gr[e]aves heer might not Judg his time lost quite/ To write of those who’f Egipt once did write?”¹⁸ Whether the Egyptians themselves appreciated the pyramids in the same way was doubtful; by the time George Sandys was viewing them (1610), the structures at Giza had in fact been long-abandoned and their builders practically forgotten, their buildings vulgarly utilised by locals as stone quarries. Once in a while, however, as the centuries passed after their building, sporadic attempts to restore ancestral monuments had taken place. The well-known story of Tuthmosis IV¹⁹ digging the Sphinx out of the sand after it appeared to him in a dream when he was still crown prince is perhaps the most famous one, but Rameses II’s son Prince Khaemwaset,²⁰ sometimes dubbed “the first Egyptologist” for his interest in the past, did some restoration of the pyramids at Saqqara (c. 1251 B.C.E.), and, even earlier, Amonemhat II in about 1427 B.C.E. had ordered work done at Giza itself. However, when the last vestiges of ancient Egyptian civilisation were gone, neglect and vandalism succeeded them for a great many centuries. Locals pillaged the sites for bricks or stone, and under the Arabs and Ottomans there was a great deal of vandalism and damage done for the sake of treasure-hunting.

between “obelisk” and “pyramid,” and the word were used interchangeably. For further details, see Wortham, *Genesis*, 5-6.

¹⁸ Mildmay Fane, earl of Westmorland, “Fullbeck,” <http://www.poetrynook.com>. Fane (1602-1666) was writing about his own home, Fulbeck Hall in Lincolnshire, which he had bought in 1632, and about other interesting sites in the parish. It seems certain from this reference that the earl had read *Pyramidographia*; furthermore, pyramids as emblems often appear in Fane’s poetry both verbally and figuratively. They may be found, for example, as illustration in his best-known volume of verse, *Otia Sacra* (1648).

¹⁹ Tuthmosis IV’s reign is usually dated c. 1401-1391 BCE, but Peter Clayton gives him a fairly long reign, 1419-1386 (*Chronicle of the Pharaohs* [London: Thames and Hudson, 1994], 112). Medical studies of the king’s mummy would appear, however, to support the case for a premature death and a shorter reign.

²⁰ Prince Khaemwaset (c.1282-1226 BCE), a son of Rameses II, was the High Priest of Ptah in Memphis. Some scholars have cited proof that he actually *dismantled* buildings for their stone rather than ordering restoration work. The evidence is contradictory; inscriptions seem to suggest that he did, for example, restore the tombs of kings Unas and Shepseskaf. See Anneke Bart, “Prince Khaemwaset,” <http://euler.slu.edu/bart/egyptianhtml>.

Greaves and Early Oriental Studies

At this point we need to leave Egypt for a while in order to place John Greaves in his intellectual context as an early orientalist, which is to say, someone interested in the East, its culture, religion and history. Any “agenda” (outside trading) which Europeans may have had for writing about the Muslim world was, in the seventeenth century, mostly directed at attempting to understand Islam, which did, when ignorance or prejudice intervened, more often than not get a bad press from English writers, a situation to which we will allude later on. Orientalism of the kind later decried by writers such as Edward Said was not a factor; as Richmond Barbour noted, “to read pre-colonial ethnography as if its rhetoric bespoke European dominance. . .is anachronistic,”²¹ not to mention inaccurate. Urs App²² and others have recently argued, however, that its germination, if not its alleged beliefs in racial superiority and its thirst for political and economic power, can be traced to the desire for knowledge and wonder of seventeenth century Europe in terms of how it viewed the East. As noted above, the prejudice (if we may call it that from a modern perspective) lay in how religion, particularly Islam, was viewed; the desire for knowledge was often coupled with a sense of fear at the power of Islamic states such as Turkey, Persia or the Mughal Empire and the relatively unknown people who lived in them. Reducing Islam to a knock-off of Christianity became a common way of dealing with that fear, and herein many scholars were complicit, including some of those who influenced Greaves.

John Greaves played his own part on a vast and various stage where there would be, as time rolled on, so many actors, each interpreting different and multifarious parts of a panoramic human drama. “In the universities that were appearing all over western Europe,” Bernard Lewis observes, “scholars imbued with the curiosity and enthusiasm of the Renaissance and disciplined by the philological discipline of the humanists

²¹ Richmond Barbour, *Before Orientalism: London's Theatre of the East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3. Barbour nevertheless goes on to argue that some of the “tropes” set in the seventeenth century were later used to help formulate orientalism. This argument is taken up by Urs App (see below) and others.

²² See Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). This book suggests that orientalism, essentially considered a nineteenth-century phenomenon, actually got under way in the eighteenth century, but could not have begun without building on earlier foundations. App’s book concentrates in large part on Asia, but many of the arguments are applicable to other locations. It would be hard to put a case for Greaves as a “proto-orientalist.”

applied themselves to the study of classical Arabic texts,”²³ an approach which extended to more than philology, and which sometimes treated Arabic studies as a weapon with which to attack Islam, as we shall see below. However, it was this same curiosity and enthusiasm, not a desire to invalidate Islam, which drove people like John Greaves to devote himself to not just the study of Arabic and other languages, but of Egyptian monuments, and possibly risking life and limb travelling to the site of those monuments. What Greaves wanted was knowledge pure and simple, knowledge which could, perhaps, throw some light on human history and on the origins of human thought.

The study of Arabic in England had been newly-revived by the time Greaves came upon the scene; William Bedwell (1563-1632) had been the first Arabic scholar produced in England since medieval times, and may have been the first to study Arabic literature as well as language. As Robert Irwin notes, “the seventeenth century, and in particular the decades prior to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642, was the heyday of Arabic and Islamic studies in England,”²⁴ and Bedwell was very much to the forefront in both these disciplines. He had been a protégé of Lancelot Andrewes, who had paid for him to study Arabic at the University of Leiden, which was fast becoming the most significant centre for oriental studies in Europe, and afforded Bedwell an opportunity to study Arabic manuscripts. A chair of Arabic had been established at Leiden in 1613, with Thomas Erpenius (van Erpe) as its first professor, whom Bedwell had met at Oxford in 1608. Leiden would be the nearest Bedwell was ever to get to the Middle East (although he once met with a Moroccan ambassador in London), but it did not stop him from having an agenda which he vigorously pushed in all his works. He was deeply concerned (and of course he was not alone in this) to debunk Islam, particularly by trying to prove that the Qu’ran was simply a mishmash derived from Christian writings and that Islam was therefore a mere perversion of Christianity, a view which persisted down to the eighteenth century. In fairness to Bedwell, he also believed that a knowledge of Arabic might be useful in matters of trade and diplomacy, but becoming an Arabic scholar, Bedwell decided, would above all enable him to better tackle his ideological enemy, and his studies duly resulted in the book for which he is best-

²³ Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 14.

²⁴ Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 87.

remembered, *Mahomet Unmasked* (1624),²⁵ as the first part of his title reads. Strictly speaking, Bedwell's book was actually a translation of an earlier seventeenth-century Arabic work; he himself noted that it was "the translation of a booke imprinted certaine yeares since and published in the Arabicke tongue," and he admitted also that "when, or where, or by whom, is not. . . anywhere expressed or declared" (*Mohammedis Imposturae*, A2).

His biographer Alastair Hamilton has remarked that Bedwell's "gratuitous venom" on the subject of Islam "is striking in its intensity,"²⁶ as even his choice of words for this title indicates, and indeed in the very subtitle we find Bedwell claiming to expose the "manifold forgeries, falsehoods and horrible impieties of the blasphemous seducer Mohammed," which may be found in the "accursed" Quran. At this point one might be tempted to think that with this clear statement of purpose there is no need to read Bedwell's book at all! However, as Hamilton notes, Bedwell attempted to separate the Arabic language itself from the fact that it was connected to Islam, but he found it difficult to do this, and his "limited knowledge of Islamic literature" (*William Bedwell*, 67) probably did not help him in his endeavour. As Derek Dunne observed, the result was that "Bedwell's text is riven with the paradox of encouraging the study of Arabic while abhorring Islam."²⁷ How much of this negative interpretation of Islam was actually heartfelt (Bedwell was, after all, an ordained minister) or whether it was simply expedient from the point of view of any scholar at the time writing from a Christian perspective, it is difficult to discern. On the positive side, Bedwell published an Arabic version of St. John's gospel and apparently planned to issue both Arabic and Persian dictionaries, projects which, however, he never finished. He also produced a work curiously-entitled *The Arabian Trudgman* (1615), which is described by Dunne as "a basic dictionary of Arabic terms and nomenclature" (*Mohammedis*, 1).²⁸ His importance, G. J. Toomer states, lay not so much in his own scholarly achievements, which were "modest," but in "his

²⁵ This is the title of the second edition of Bedwell's book, which for some reason became better-known than the first, *Mohammedis Imposturae: that is a discovery of the manifold forgeries, falsehood and horrible impieties of the blasphemous seducer Mohammed* (1615).

²⁶ Alastair Hamilton, *William Bedwell, the Arabist, 1563-1632* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 68.

²⁷ Derek Dunne, "*Mohammedis Imposturae: that is, a discovery of the manifold forgeries, falsehood, and horrible impieties of the blasphemous seducer Mohammed*," <http://www.ucd.ie/readingseast/essay4.html>, 4.

²⁸ "Trudgman" is a variant of the now-obsolete "truchman," which means "interpreter." Its origin is probably Arabic.

contributions to the promotion of the study of the language and its literature.”²⁹

As the seventeenth century drew closer to an end, though, “the English public was not particularly interested in Arabic studies” (Irwin, *For Lust*, 88); Bedwell’s endeavours, invective and all, generously underwritten by bishop Andrewes, languished in relative obscurity along with a great deal of other Arabic scholarship, much to the chagrin of archbishop Ussher and others. Edward Pococke, the first Laudian Professor of Arabic, for example, may be found lamenting to Greaves’s brother Thomas in 1663 that “the Genius of the times, for these Studies, is so much altered since you and I first set about them.”³⁰ John Greaves certainly knew Bedwell, but, as the latter’s son-in-law John Clerke noted in his dedication after Bedwell’s death to Greaves of Bedwell’s translation and expansion of Petrus Ramus’s *Via regia ad geometriam* (1636) that “your acquaintance with the author before his death was not long,” which probably dates their meeting to 1631 at the earliest (Cited by Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome*, 128).

Bedwell’s colleague at Leiden, Erpenius, who was a protégé of Joseph Scaliger as well as of Bedwell himself, whom, he wrote, “taught me more than I deserve” (Cited in Hamilton, *Bedwell*, 32), is mentioned by Greaves in connection with his edition of the thirteenth-century Coptic historian George Elmacin’s *History of the Saracens* (1623), and occupies an extremely important place in the history of early oriental studies. In addition to his chair of Arabic, Erpenius also held one in Hebrew, which had been established especially for him in 1619. In fact, along with Erpenius, Greaves was to draw on the work of several scholars from Leiden, most of whom were connected by some sort of master-student relationship. Erpenius had edited and published Raphelengius’s *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum* (1613), a work which had been found useful by Greaves, who wrote to Ussher (September 1644) that he was compiling a “Persian lexicon out of such words as I met with in the evangelists and the psalms,” and that he now has “a stock of above six thousand words in that language, I think as many as Raphelengius³¹ hath in his Arabic dictionary.”

²⁹ G. J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 63.

³⁰ Edward Pococke to Thomas Greaves, cited in P. M. Holt, “Edward Pococke (1604-91), the First Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford,” <http://www.oxoniensia.org/volumes> (1991), 127.

³¹ Raphelengius or Frans van Ravelingen (1539-1597) was Professor of Hebrew at Leiden as well as being the university’s official printer. His *Lexicon arabicum* appeared posthumously in 1613.

Erpenius's student Jacob Golius or van Gool (1596-1667), who took over the professorship of Arabic after Erpenius's death in 1624, became acquainted with Greaves when the latter was in Leiden "about the year 1635," as Thomas Birch surmised, although he was not sure whether Greaves had been in Leiden before or after he embarked for Egypt.³² Golius, following in the footsteps of Raphelengius, issued his own Arabic-Latin dictionary (1653), and was a student of Persian and Turkish; a surviving Latin letter from Greaves, then at Merton College, to Golius concerning some Coptic and Greek manuscripts quotes a book title directly in Arabic and refers to Golius's "Egyptian observations" (Greaves, *Miscellaneous Works* 2, 458). Unfortunately, Golius, who apparently "considered teaching to be beneath his dignity" (Irwin, *For Lust*, 104), proved to be the last in the line of Leiden's eminent orientalists and could partly be blamed for the decline of Arabic studies there. As one of his students, the young oriental scholar Hieronymus Harder (1648-1675), who was offered a professorship at Leiden but never took it up, ruefully observed in a letter to Pococke (1671), Golius "did not exercise the students. . . nor use his authority to make them take pains."³³ According to Harder, though, it was not just the laziness of Golius which was to blame, but "the Avarice of the Age, which gave no Attention to any Sciences that were not greatly lucrative" (Cited in P. M. Holt, "Edward Pococke," 127). Some readers may find this complaint very timely.

Greaves also had contacts with French scholars and intellectuals. His friend and frequent correspondent Claude Hardy (c.1600-1676), for example, was much more than a mathematician and translator of Erasmus and Euclid; he was reputedly master of no fewer than thirty-six languages,

³² It is possible that Greaves met Golius before that time, perhaps in 1633, as he was in Holland that year, a fact not known, it seems, to Birch. He "almost certainly. . . attended Golius' Arabic lectures" in Leiden at that time. See Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom*, 128-29 for details. Zur Shalev, too, believes that Greaves went to Leiden and enrolled in the university "most probably to attend the Arabist Jacobus Golius's lectures" ("Travel Notebooks," 82). By 1635 Greaves was certainly in Paris, where he first met the mathematician Claude Hardy. Daniela Prögler goes farther and states that Greaves actually "matriculated at Leiden during his travels through Europe in the 1630s" (*English Students at Leiden University, 1575-1650* [Farnham: Ashgate, 2013], 21).

³³ Cited in E. Jamil Ragep and Sally Ragep, eds. *Tradition, Transmission, Transformation: Proceedings of Two Conferences on Pre-Modern Science held at the University of Oklahoma* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 449. Harder was offered the post of Professor of Oriental Languages at Leiden, went to Istanbul in 1674, and died there. At his death he was working on a history of the Egyptian sultan Saladin, about whom he was corresponding with Pococke.

which included Greek and Arabic as well as several dialects of Syriac, Persian and other oriental tongues. In 1629 Descartes wrote admiringly that “if you give Mr. Hardy a good dictionary in Chinese, or any other language whatsoever, and a book written in the same language, he will endeavour to make sense of it.”³⁴ Hardy belonged to the circle of Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637), astronomer, antiquarian, collector, and, above all, an incredibly voluminous letter-writer who corresponded with practically every eminent scientist and intellectual in Europe,³⁵ and whose wide circle of friends would have been very useful to Greaves. In 1638, Greaves, writing to Hardy, asks him whether he can find out from the family of “the noble Peiresc” whether it would be possible for him to purchase any coins or other ancient material from the deceased’s estate. This certainly indicates that Greaves was well-acquainted with what Peiresc did, even if he did not know him personally.

Greaves’s wide-ranging contacts included the Danish scholar Peder Lauridsen Scavenius (1623-1685), who was Professor of Law at the University of Copenhagen and whom Greaves likely met at Oxford in 1647 when Scavenius was studying there. He had travelled widely in Europe when he was getting his education, and became noted for his large library, which he eventually ended up selling to the king of Denmark, Frederik III. Scavenius addressed Greaves (November, 1649) as his “much-respected friend,” and noted that Athanasius Kircher was a useful source for recommending the acquaintance of various scholars as well as letting Greaves know of the death of one “Master Pecket,” an English merchant in Constantinople with whom both men must have been acquainted.³⁶ With Scavenius, as well as with the others mentioned above, Greaves obviously had a personal as well as a professional relationship, “steady in his friendships” indeed, as John Ward stated. Greaves also corresponded with Franciscus Junius or François du Jun (1591-1677), a Dutch scholar who had spent two decades in England from 1620 and had a

³⁴ René Descartes to Marin Mersenne (20 November, 1629), cited in J. J. O’Connor and E. F. Robinson, “Claude Hardy,” http://www.history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Hardy_Claude.html (2010), 2.

³⁵ A few of Peiresc’s correspondents mentioned by Greaves include Joseph Scaliger, Carolus Clusius, John Selden and William Camden.

³⁶ There were several merchants of that name in Constantinople, almost, it seems, a dynasty of them. In 1634 a James Peckett made his will in Smyrna (Edgar Hall, *The Romance of Wills and Testaments* [London: Forgotten Books, 2013], 93), and a Robert Peckett is mentioned in several places, but the date is 1655. The one alluded to by Scavenius is also cited as “jr.,” and may be the son of James Peckett, but could just as likely be James himself.

significant collection of manuscripts as well as being employed collecting coins, medals and art for the Earl of Arundel.³⁷ Junius, who knew Ussher and John Selden amongst others, wrote to Greaves (in English) from Amsterdam in May 1652 thanking him for “the manifold respects and favours formerly received,” and telling him that Queen Christina of Sweden “is now likewise about the sending of one into Turkey for Greek manuscripts,” but Junius can’t remember who it was (Greaves, *Miscellaneous Works* 2, 469).³⁸ A proper study of these friendships and the resulting scholarly networks would fill an entire book, but these examples show that Greaves kept up with what his colleagues were doing, and that he studiously avoided any display of scholarly “territoriality” in his studies. He was open to what others had to say, and willing to incorporate it in his own work when it was useful; unlike some other scholars of the time, Greaves also gave formal credit (usually in footnotes) to others’ work.

Greaves’s immersion in the intellectual milieu of English orientalists is unquestionable. Much of this came about because of his connection with William Laud (1573-1645), whose fame, unfortunately, often rests mainly with his ill-advised enforcement, as Archbishop of Canterbury, of the *Book of Common Prayer* in churches and the furore it caused, his position as an adviser to Charles I and his eventual execution by order of Parliament. This view is to sell Laud short; as a collector of ancient manuscripts and an avid patron of oriental scholarship, he deserves great credit. Laud was absolutely convinced that learning was the best way to strengthen and perhaps aid in spreading the Christian religion; one of the methods to do this was to find out as much as one could about the ancient cultures and languages of the past, particularly those which played a part in the biblical story and those which had an impact on the present. As well, modern languages such as Persian, Arabic and Turkish needed to be mastered to properly understand Islam, the perceived rival of Christianity. There was, Laud noted, “a great deale of Learning” available for students of oriental

³⁷ For details of Junius, see Rolf Henrik Bremmer, ed. *Franciscus Junius Ff. and His Circle* (Leiden: Rodopi, 1998).

³⁸ Queen Christina (1623-1689) had a great interest in oriental philosophy, religion and mathematics. She hired the Dutch scholar and manuscript collector Isaac Vossius (1618-1689) in 1649 to help her create a library and an academy, and even after her abdication continued to collect manuscripts and study such texts as the Kabbalah, Hermetic writings and Neoplatonism. For details, see Susanna Åkerman, “Queen Christina’s Esoteric Interests as a Background to her Platonic Academies,” <https://ojos.abo.fi/indiex/php/scripta/article>, 17-37.

languages, “and that very fit and necessary to be known.”³⁹ Furthermore, studying the ancient languages of the Bible might give Protestant scholars an edge over their Catholic rivals and possibly provide ammunition for the continued doctrinal wars which the two faiths had been waging for decades. To these ends there was a desire to establish chairs of Arabic at the universities, and men of means, such as Laud (who himself knew little or no Arabic), were willing to step in and supply the money for them. In addition, Laud and others decided that collecting ancient manuscripts was a necessary adjunct to the study of eastern cultures, and this activity eventually became a central part of their endeavours.

In England, too, there was almost a “succession” of orientalist and of those who were willing to further the study of the east. Laud was a great collector of oriental manuscripts, and Greaves came to his attention as someone who might possibly be able to procure some of these for him. Greaves seems to have been introduced to Laud in around 1630 by the mathematician Peter Turner, his predecessor as Professor of Geometry at Gresham College. The Gresham appointment (1630) introduced Greaves to an educational world which was a little different from Oxford or Cambridge. Gresham College, founded in 1597 by Sir Thomas Gresham, was a relatively forward-looking institution which was described by H. F. Kearney as “more middle-of-the-road protestant than puritan,”⁴⁰ and was therefore more like a traditional university such as Oxford or Cambridge than a radically new foundation, but it did offer “practical” education, and had professorships not just in traditional subjects like divinity and rhetoric, but also in medicine and even music. The same year that Greaves received his new appointment also saw Laud, then bishop of London, appointed Chancellor of Oxford University. Far from being a rubber stamp chancellor, Laud very quickly decided that it was time for Oxford to shed its well-deserved reputation as “a centre for intellectual torpor” (Irwin, *For*

³⁹ Cited in Nabil Matar, ed. and introd. *Henry Stubbe and the Beginnings of Islam: The Originall and Progress of Mahometanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 17. Henry Stubbe or Stubbs (1632-1671) was a physician, Parliamentary polemicist and a renowned classical scholar. His book was published in 1671, and was known as a sympathetic treatment of Islam.

⁴⁰ Charles Webster, ed. *The Intellectual Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 227. Kearney is taking issue here with Christopher Hill’s thesis in his book of the same name that “puritans” were the main driving force behind advances in education, especially on the practical side. Gresham College, he states, was “an institution which owed a great deal to the past. . .with a recognition of practical needs” (229). Gresham financed the college with rental revenues from shops situated on land which he owned. It featured (and still features) public lectures given by distinguished authorities on various topics.

Lust, 90), and to this effect he finally succeeded in establishing a professorship of Arabic (1636), which he permanently financed with land revenues.



William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, c. 1636. Portrait after Sir Anthony van Dyck. Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons.

Some improvement in the study of the East had already been made in the century before Laud's chancellorship. Regius Professorships in Hebrew had been established at Cambridge in 1540 and in Oxford six

years later; Sir Henry Savile of Merton College, Oxford, (1549-1622), a mathematician, Greek scholar (he was Elizabeth I's tutor in that language) and one of the translators of the King James bible, had established endowed chairs of geometry and astronomy in 1619. In 1643 Greaves became the Savilian Professor of Astronomy after the death of his friend John Bainbridge, the translator of Ptolemy's *Planetary Hypotheses* and Proclus's *Commentaries* on Plato and Euclid. Bainbridge, the first Savilian Professor of Geometry, had recommended Greaves for the Gresham post in succession to Peter Turner, and had praised the former's "singular skill in the mathematicks" in a letter to George Abbot, archbishop of Canterbury (Cited in Shalev, "Travel Notebooks," 82). As Toomer states, "we cannot doubt that Bainbridge's influence was formative on Greaves" (*Eastern Wisdom*, 75). Bainbridge had a wide circle of scholarly friends, including Ussher, Bedwell, Golius and John Selden, and his "enthusiasm" for oriental languages "was motivated by his study of ancient astronomy and chronology."⁴¹ He was a member of the so-called Gresham Circle, a group of scholars with moderately puritan views, which essentially meant that they did not advocate extreme conformity with Presbyterian or Calvinist doctrines, and in England particularly they were at the forefront of educational reform. Bainbridge, who had been the first English astronomer to use a telescope in the observation of comets, was well-known for his denunciation of astrology, which he called "vulgar" and criticised "the vanity of astronomical predictions grounded upon the idle conceits of celestial houses," although he apparently "used astrological conventions" in his interpretation of the comet.⁴² Greaves later (1648) edited Bainbridge's "bilingual Arabic and Latin astronomical treatise" *Canicularia* after the author's death,⁴³ a tribute to the close association the two scholars had enjoyed. Greaves was also named as Bainbridge's

⁴¹ Mordechai Feingold, "Oriental Studies," in Nicholas Tyacke, ed. *History of the University of Oxford*, Volume 4, *Seventeenth Century Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 486.

⁴² Cited in Thomas Hockey et al., eds. *Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers* (New York: Springer, 2007), 85.

⁴³ Avner Ben-Zaken, *Cross-Cultural Scientific Exchanges in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1560-1660* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 129. Greaves appended a supplement, *Demonstratio ortus Sirii heliaci pro parallel inferioris Ægypti* to his edition of Bainbridge's work. Ben-Zaken goes on to state that in *Canicularia* Bainbridge "aimed to resolve. . . [chronological] controversies by returning to primordial sources and to a purified set of astronomical nomenclature and language" (129), which would certainly have been of interest to Greaves and his measurements of the pyramids, which he saw as a possible source for "primordial" measurement.

executor, “the consequence of which was a complaint against him brought before the House of Commons.” The matter was eventually settled with the help of John Selden (Aikin, *Lives*, 420).

The Savilian chair of geometry had been held since 1631 by Peter Turner, who, like Greaves, was a political and ideological ally of Laud and who, curiously, left no works on mathematics to posterity, and seems to have been better-known in his own time for his linguistic skills. Anthony à Wood did call him “an accomplished mathematician,” but Turner was also, according to Wood, “an exact Latinist and Grecian, well skill’d in the Hebrew and Arabic,” and, because of this and his close friendship and collaboration with Laud, another very useful connection for Greaves. At the same time, as Wood saw it, Turner “wrote many admirable things, but being curious and critical he could never finish them.”⁴⁴ Unlike the peace-loving Greaves, Turner had joined the royalist army and was made a prisoner-of-war in 1641, but returned to his academic post until his formal ejection by the Parliamentary visitors in 1648. His predecessor in the chair, Henry Briggs (1561-1631), known for his work with logarithms,⁴⁵ had been one of Greaves’s mentors at Merton College and had also been a friend of Bedwell’s. Briggs had repeatedly “expressed his willingness to lobby for an Arabic lectureship at Cambridge,” but had been unsuccessful in his efforts (Feingold, in Tyacke, *History*, 486). This did not happen until 1643, when Sir Thomas Adams finally provided the funds for an Arabic chair in the hope that translating the Bible and other Christian works into Arabic might contribute to the spreading of Christianity in Muslim countries,⁴⁶ an agenda which exactly corresponded to Laud’s.

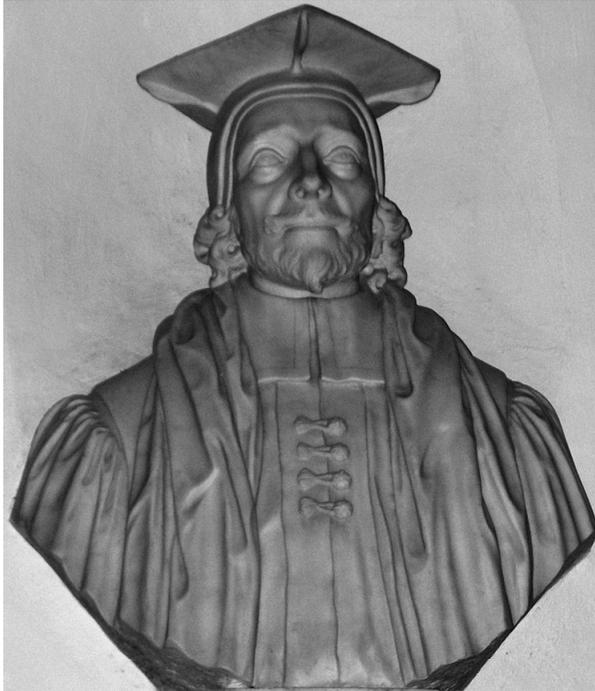
Laud’s interest in the knowledge that could be gleaned from Arabic and Persian sources led directly to Greaves’s Egyptian adventure, but it would be the appointment of Edward Pococke (1604-1691), a pupil of Bedwell, as the first Laudian Professor of Arabic, which would make an impression on Greaves that would have further important personal and political

⁴⁴ Anthony à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ed. Philip Bliss (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1813-20), 3, 306.

⁴⁵ See, for example, A. J. Thompson and Karl Pearson, “Henry Briggs and His Work on Logarithms,” *American Mathematical Monthly*, 3 (1925): 129-31. Briggs published *Arithmetica logarithmica* in 1624.

⁴⁶ Sir Thomas Adams, 1st bart. (1586-1668) was a wealthy London merchant and one of the great benefactors of his time. A staunch royalist during the Civil War and Lord Mayor of London in 1645, he was imprisoned by Parliament in 1651 after Charles II’s defeat at Worcester. In spite of his Royalist sympathies, he served as MP for London in the Protectoral Parliaments of 1654 and 1656. In addition to endowing the Chair of Arabic, Adams also financed the translation and distribution of the gospels in Persian.

consequences for him. Pococke was, it would seem, a rather reluctant traveller, who first went to the East in 1630 as chaplain to English merchants in Aleppo. “I think that he that hath once been out of England,” he wrote to a friend soon after arriving in Aleppo, “if he get home, will not easily be persuaded to leave it again. There is nothing that may make a Man envy a Traveller” (Cited in Holt, “Pococke,” 121).⁴⁷



Edward Pococke. By User: Prumeau—Own work, Public Domain. This bust is in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

Greaves had probably met Pococke before 1636, as the latter had befriended Greaves's younger brother Thomas when he was a student at Corpus Christi College in 1627, “and Pococke, though seven years Thomas's senior, and a fellow from 1628, was his friend, corresponded with him from Aleppo, taught him Arabic, and (in 1637, if not earlier),

⁴⁷ The full text of the letter may be found in Leonard Twells, ed. *The Theological Works of the Learned Dr. Pococke* (London, 1740), 1, 15.

shared rooms with him in College” (Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome*, 131). Pococke and Thomas Greaves exchanged a great deal of letters on various subjects whilst the latter was in the East, and over time Pococke became very close to both the Greaves brothers; in 1650 he described John Greaves as “*doctissimus mihi amicissimus*,” my most learned and very good friend.⁴⁸ Pococke himself did not meet Laud personally until about 1636, if not later. They did correspond; as early as 1631 we find Laud writing to Pococke asking him to collect ancient manuscripts and coins.⁴⁹ In 1602 Sir Thomas Bodley had re-established and re-invigorated the university library at Oxford which now bears his name, and one of the preoccupations of those interested in oriental studies and other new areas was the acquisition of books and manuscripts for the library as well as for their personal collections. It may well have been Pococke who drew Laud’s attention to Greaves, but others could have been involved, too; in 1639, for instance, we find a letter from Lord Scudamore, an old friend of Laud’s who himself had a scholarly and academic bent, in which he replies to a letter from Laud requesting him to help collect manuscripts. “Has Your Grace employed Mr. Greaves to Constantinople for manuscripts?” Scudamore asked Laud; “‘Tis absolutely the best course” (Trevor-Roper, *Laud*, 380),⁵⁰ and Greaves duly embarked on his “indefatigable journeys in search of manuscripts” (Trevor-Roper, *Laud*, 283), along with all the other people whom Laud had importuned to collect for him. These included, apart from Greaves, Pococke and Scudamore, Sir Thomas Roe, the ambassador to the Mughal Empire, and the earl of Arundel, who had been on a mission to Vienna. Greaves was certainly one of the best when it came to acquiring manuscripts; indeed, he was so ardent in his pursuit of them that he could be quite unscrupulous. In a letter written from Constantinople (August 2, 1638), he tells his unnamed correspondent that “I have procured Ptolemy’s *Almagest*, the fairest book that I have ever seen, stolen by a *sipahi* (as I am informed) out of the king’s library in the

⁴⁸ Cited in P. M. Holt, *Studies in the History of the Near East* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), 24, n. 19.

⁴⁹ H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud 1573-1645* (London: Macmillan, 1965), 282.

⁵⁰ Sir John, first viscount Scudamore (1601-1671) was a diplomat and MP, a staunch supporter of Laud and a royalist during the Civil War. He served as ambassador to France (1635-1639) and was put under house arrest by Parliament in 1643. After his release in 1647, Scudamore retired to his estate and took no further part in national politics. Trevor-Roper describes him as “a man of frail health and studious disposition,” who was “subject to a crop of religious doubts,” which were apparently resolved by his contact with Laud (*Laud*, 62-3).

seraglio.” Greaves thinks that this opens “a possibility of having also those Greek and Latin authors which I mentioned in my former letters to be buried in the seraglio.” What the penalty might be for receiving books stolen from the sultan’s library or perhaps bribing people to steal them he does not say.

Like Bedwell before him, Pococke was not favourably disposed towards Islam, but he was also “particularly concerned to discredit Western folklore and crude polemical lies about the Prophet and Muslim doctrine” (Irwin, *For Lust*, 94), and for him this meant a systematic study of Islam’s history and teachings. As P. M. Holt observed, “Pococke, although a 17th-century clergyman, fully convinced of the truths of Christianity as mediated by the Church of England, gives evidence of a more scholarly and unbiased attitude [towards Islam].”⁵¹ Pococke differed from his mentor Bedwell in the way he looked at Islam; Eric Bishop described his approach as “friendly learning,”⁵² which seems to have appealed to Greaves rather more than the polemics of Bedwell and others. He therefore collected as many manuscripts and books, particularly commentaries on the Qu’ran, as he could, and as an Arabist he was unsurpassed. In between his duties at Aleppo, Pococke had learned Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac and Ethiopic, as well as spending a great deal of time with Jewish scholars and learned Muslims, with whom he seems to have got along very well in spite of his professed antipathy towards Islam. He also met the ill-fated (he was strangled by order of sultan Murad IV) Patriarch of Constantinople, Cyril Lucaris, with whom Laud had been corresponding, and who had sent the archbishop a manuscript of the Pentateuch together with an Arabic translation. Laud, who had not yet met Pococke in person, offered him the Laudian professorship when he returned to England in 1636, but the next year sent him off again, this time to Constantinople as acting chaplain to the English ambassadors Sir Peter Wyche and his successor Sir Sackville Crowe, and in the company of John Greaves, whom he had known well for a number of years.

Taking leave of Pococke in Constantinople, Greaves went on to Rhodes and Alexandria, where he continued to search out material for Laud. Pococke himself spent the next three years in Turkey on what was probably his real mission, buying oriental manuscripts and Greek coins for the archbishop; meanwhile his position in Oxford was temporarily filled by Greaves’s brother Thomas, who promoted the learning of Arabic and

⁵¹ P. M. Holt, “Edward Pococke (1604-91), the First Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford,” [http:// www.oxoniensia.org/volumes](http://www.oxoniensia.org/volumes) (1991): 119-30, here 128.

⁵² Eric Francis Fox Bishop, “Edward Pococke and the Approach to Islam through Friendly Learning,” *Anglican Theological Review* (July, 1963). Reprint, 1.

praised the Arabs, who had, he said, “preserved the learning of the ancients in the time of barbarism.” Thomas Greaves went out of his way to single out Averroes (Ibn Rushd) amongst Arab scholars, whom, he stated in a lecture, possessed “the genius and soul of Aristotle,”⁵³ high praise, indeed. Pococke would remain in Constantinople until 1640, after which he returned home via Paris, spending time in the company of people like Hugo Grotius, whose *De veritate religionis Christianae* (1627) he translated into Arabic for the use of missionaries,⁵⁴ and Gabriel Sionita (Jibra’il al-Sahyuni), a Lebanese Maronite Christian who had translated al-Idrisi’s *Universal Geography* as *Geographia Nubiensis*, another work cited by Greaves. Greaves himself had met Sionita when the latter was in Paris (1634) in the company of the former French ambassador to the Ottoman court, François Savary de Brèves, himself an enthusiastic antiquarian and collector who had brought the Maronite scholar back to Paris with him and had also established an Arabic printing press in Rome.

In 1639 Greaves wrote to Pococke from Alexandria, and “advised him not to devote himself so much to his Oriental studies as to forget his hopes and his fortunes at home,”⁵⁵ an admonition Pococke eventually followed, and none too soon. Finally back in England early in 1641, Pococke made a point of visiting Laud, who was by then locked up in the Tower of London awaiting resignedly whatever fate Parliament was planning for him. Pococke, had, like Greaves, strong royalist sympathies, which caused him to lose his stipend under the Commonwealth and Protectorate, which was given to Oliver Cromwell’s brother-in-law Dr. Peter French, a prebendary of Christ Church and “one of the official preachers to the Council of the Protectorate,”⁵⁶ However, like so many scholars, Pococke had friends on both sides, including Dr. John Owen, the new Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University and a member of what we might call Oliver Cromwell’s “inner circle.” Another useful friend was the distinguished scholar John Selden, also a Parliamentary man, but one to whom learning meant much more

⁵³ P. M. Holt, “Arabic Studies in Seventeenth Century England,” in G. A. Russell, ed. *The ‘Arabick’ Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth Century England* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 29.

⁵⁴ This was a Latin prose version of a poem which Grotius had originally written in Dutch whilst he was in prison. For further details, see G. J. Toomer, “Edward Pococke’s Translation of Grotius, *De veritate*,” *Grotiana* (2012): 88-105.

⁵⁵ Cited in William Oldys, ed. *Biographica Britannica, or The Lives of the Most Eminent Persons who have Flourished in Great Britain and Ireland. . .*, vol. 5 (London, 1770), 3374.

⁵⁶ Blair Worden, *God’s Instruments: Political Conduct in the England of Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 118. Peter French was married to Cromwell’s sister Robina (1594-1660).