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L’Institut d’Égypte Between Colonialism and Orientalism (1798-1801)

Kolonyalizm ve Şarkiyatçılık Arasında L’Institut d’Égypte (1798-1801)

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Abstract

The Western world’s colonial expansion and competition during the 19th century turned various parts of the world into targets for territorial division. Indeed, Ottoman territories in Africa also became one of the arenas of this colonial competition with Napoleon’s eastern campaign in 1798, continuing throughout the century and through the partitions during World War I. This study focuses on the activities of the Institut de l’Égypte, established by Napoleon in Egypt following a colonial invasion.

In Western historiography, it is known that members and institutions of another “modern” initiative evaluated the occupation of Egypt around the concepts of enlightenment, colonialism, and civilization before Mehmed Ali Pasha’s reforms. This modern initiative bore traces of French colonialism. It is known that with French invasion, a scientific delegation arrived in Egypt alongside officers and soldiers. On August 22, 1798, the Institut de l’Égypte was established around this delegation. It is evident that Napoleon’s Egyptian campaign contained two aspects of colonialism: one being the occupation of a strategically important place like Egypt, and the other being the efforts to study and understand Egypt’s past, culture, and all its resources to ensure the permanence of the occupation. The Institut de l’Égypte manifested as a colonial institution. Thus, the article aims to examine how French colonialism was reflected in an intellectual institution, focusing on the publications of this institution and the memoirs of the period.

Öz

Batı dünyasının 19. yüzyılda kolonyal genişleme ve bunun için rekabet halinde olması dünyanın farklı coğrafyalarını toprak paylaşımının hedefi haline getirmişti. Nitekim Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Afrika’daki toprakları da Napolyon’un doğu seferiyle 1798’de bu kolonyal rekabetin alanlarından biri haline gelmiş ve neredeyse tüm yüzyıl ve I. Dünya Savaşı sırasındaki paylaşımlarla devam etmiştir. Bu çalışma bir kolonyal işgali takiben Napolyon tarafından Mısır’da kurulan Institut de l’Égypte’in faaliyetlerine odaklanmaktadır.

Batı tarih yazımında Mehmed Ali Paşa’nın reformları öncesinde başka bir “modern” girişimin üyeleri ve kurumlarının aydınlanma, kolonyalizm ve medenileştirme kavramları etrafında Mısır’ın işgalini değerlendirdiği bilinmektedir. Bu modern girişimin altında Fransız kolonyalizminin izleri vardır. Napolyon’un işgaliyle subay ve askerlerin yanı sıra bir bilim heyetinin de Mısır’a gelmişti. Bu heyet etrafında 22 Ağustos 1798’de Institut de l’Égypte kurulmuştur. Napolyon’un Mısır seferinin kolonyalizmin iki yönünü ihtiva ettiği görülmektedir. Mısır gibi stratejik bir yeri işgal etmek, diğeri de işgalin kalıcılığı için Mısır’ın mazisi, kültürü ve tüm kaynaklarıyla incelenmesi ve anlaşılması çabalarıdır. Institut de l’Égypte bir kolonyal kurum olarak tezahür etmişti. Buradan hareketle makale, Fransız sömürgeciliğinin entelektüel bir kurumda nasıl karşılık bulduğunu, bu kurumun yayınlarını ve devrin hatıratlarını merkeze alarak incelemeyi hedeflemektedir.

Keywords

L’Institut d’Égypte • colonialism • Napoleon Bonaparte • *Description de l’Égypte, Mémoires sur l’Égypte*.

Anahtar Kelimeler

L’Institut de l’Égypte • Kolonyalizm, Napolyon Bonapart • *Description de l’Égypte, Mémoires sur l’Égypte*.



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Introduction

The French occupation of Egypt between 1798 and 1801 created important political and administrative consequences. The authority of the governor appointed by the Ottoman Sultan diminished at the end of the 18th century, and this governor fell within the administrative and economic zone of influence of the Mamluk Beys. When the French army arrived at Alexandria in 1798, they found a double-headed administration beyond the authority of the Governor of Egypt, comprising of Mamluk Beys Ibrahim and Murad. The French occupation terminated this administrative structure. Administrative change was the first consequence of the occupation. The second was the transformation of Egypt as a strategic area of world politics by the Armée d'Orient. Throughout the early modern period, Egypt was not addressed in Western Europe at all and remained outside the attention of general politics. However, after the campaign of Napoleon, disinterest towards Egypt ended in Europe and especially in England, and Egypt became an important diplomatic and military field of competition. The third consequence of the Napoleonic occupation was the enhancement of the knowledge on the Egyptian history, geography and culture thanks to the works of French scientists.¹ However, it is obvious that the Egyptian campaign was a colonialization attempt. This was a large-scale strategic operation designed to threaten England beyond the British Isles, control the road to India, and if possible, reach India through the Red Sea. Hence, the aim was to make Egypt a French colony and undermine the English commercial might in India or reach India through this new colony. For that, they had to conquer and fully occupy Egypt, settle and build a colony there.²

On the other hand, we know that the interest of France in Egypt started to increase with the second half of the 18th century. During this period, French travelers had also written about the importance of Egypt.³ For instance, one of the most striking of these is the two-volume *Travels in Syria and Egypt, During the Years 1783, 1784, & 1785* by Constantine-François de Volney in 1787.⁴ Moreover, the French had a growing commercial connection with Egypt. Egypt had raised to the second place after the sugar islands in the Caribbean (Martinique, Guadeloupe and St. Dominique) in the French overseas trade. Nevertheless, the French had three consulates in Alexandria, Rosetta and Cairo at the end of the 18th century. When Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand (1757-1838) became the Foreign Minister in 1797, he openly stated that he supported the Egyptian Campaign and that France would not only establish a colony in Egypt but she would also use this region as the center of the great French Empire in the East.⁵ The foundations of the 1798 Campaign may be directly traced to the weakening of the French West Indies during the Revolution. Deprived of the old sugar, cotton and indigo sources, France, was looking for a region close to Egypt where she could acquire these goods. At this point, the interest in the Egyptian agriculture from the early days of the Napoleonic occupation is striking.⁶

Per this policy, the French Foreign Ministry was corresponding with 40 French merchants in Cairo and training and maintaining a small orientalist group who spoke Arabic and Turkish. Moreover, since France

¹ Henri Dehérain, "L'Exploration de la Haute-Égypte par la Commission des Sciences et Arts de L'Armée d'Orient en 1799", *Revue Historique*, 166/II, 1931, p. 259-261; Henri Munier, *Tables de la Description de l'Égypte, Suivies d'une Bibliographie sur l'Expedition Française de Bonaparte*, Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale au Caire, Cairo 1943; Jean-Edouard Goby, "Contribution a Pinventaire des Sources Manuscrites et a l'Etude Bibliographique de l'Histoire de l'Expedition Française en Égypte", *Bulletin de l'institut d'Égypte*, Issue 33, 1952, p. 305-322.

² *La Décade Égyptienne*, Ed. Jean-Lambert Tallien, Jean-Joseph Marcel, I, 1 January 1799, 105; François Charles-Roux, "Bonaparte Gouverneur Colonial", *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1829-1971), 64/III, 1941, p. 290-291.

³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin, London 1991, p. 81.

⁴ Constantin-François Volney, *Travels through Syria and Egypt, in the years 1783, 1784, and 1785*, I-II, G. G. J. and J. Robinson, London 1787.

⁵ Robert L. Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2010, p. 198.

⁶ Carl Ludwig Lokke, "The French Agricultural Mission to Egypt in 1801", *Agricultural History* 10/III, 1936, p. 111-117; Carl Ludwig Lokke, *France and the Colonial Question: A Study of Contemporary French Opinion, 1763-1801*, Octagon Books, London 1976.



had lost its position in India during the Seven Years' War, it was looking for a new strategic area through Egypt. This would open the route to Asia via the Isthmus of Suez for the French. Officials from the Ministry had suggested similar projects to their successors throughout the 1770s and 1870s. The attitudes that would give acclaim to such a venture in favor of the “civilizing mission” were fully shaped at this stage of the Enlightenment which corresponded largely to the decline of the Ottoman Empire.⁷ Besides, according to Volney, “despotism” was the greatest evil of the East, while freedom was its greatest need and precondition of wealth and civic virtue. The French had already differentiated between the strategies for the two colonies. The English strategy in India was to build foreign domination instead of native despotism. As an alternative, the own strategy of the French had a “liberating intervention” character, which would benefit both parties in principle. As claimed by Fourier in *Préface Historique*, “Egypt would not only become a colony, but a French province. Stretching from the Mediterranean to Nubia, the country could be imagined as an egregious garden that could support very diverse and valuable agricultural products”.⁸

1. French in Egypt

In July 1798, shortly after the French Army occupied Cairo, Bonaparte established *Institut d'Égypte*, and the Hasan Khashef Palace housed this colonial institution which survived until 1801.⁹ Claiming that he came to defend Egyptians against the tyranny of the Mamluk Beys, Napoleon had occupied the palace of Mamluk Elfi Bey for himself. He allocated two palaces of the Mamluk Beys to the Institute.¹⁰ Now, the French resided in these palaces, once the symbol of the power and wealth of the Mamluk Beys. A significant number of 151 members of the Egyptian Institute Commission of the Sciences and Arts (Commission des Sciences et Arts) was engineers or technicians. Only Gaspard Monge, Claude-Louis Berthollet, Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Fourier, Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Déodat de Dolomieu out of the scientific commission of 151 members had any recognition.¹¹ Monge and Berthollet were seen as the founders of geometry and physical chemistry, respectively. Fourier studied mathematics. In addition, Fourier impressed Lagrange and Monge and was assigned to teach mathematics at Ecole Polytechnique. Geoffroy was assigned as the Zoology Chair at Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle when it was established in 1793.¹² This scientific commission and institute had given France the opportunity to reestablish her colonial presence in a strategic location of the world.¹³

The Egyptian Campaign was a turning point in the careers of these young scholars, the children of the Enlightenment and French Revolution. In the following years, names such as French Naturalist Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1772-1844)¹⁴ would become renowned scientists. Put together under the banner of scientists and artists, these names met at an organization called the Commission of the Sciences and Arts and were

⁷ Charles Coulston Gillispie-Michel Dewachter, *The Monuments of Egypt: The Napoleonic Edition*, Princeton Architectural Press, Princeton 1987, p. 3-4.

⁸ Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier, “Préface Historique”, *Description de l'Égypte: ou recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée Française, publié par les ordres de Sa Majesté l'Empereur Napoléon le Grand*, Ed. Edme François Jomard, II, II, 1: plate 1, Antiquités, L'Imprimerie Impériale, Paris 1809, IV- V; Sid, *Orientalism*, p. 81-82.

⁹ Abd al-Rahmân Jabartî, *Abd al-Ra'hmân al-Jabartî's History of Egypt, Ajâ'ib al- Âthâr fî'l-Tarâjim wa'l-Akhabâr*, Trans. and Ed. Thomas Philipp-Moshe Perlmann, Franz Steiner, III, Stuttgart 1994, 56; Henri Pérès, “L'Institut d'Égypte et l'Œuvre de Bonaparte Jugés par Deux Historiens Arabes Contemporains”, *Arabica*, 4/II, 1957, p. 114.

¹⁰ Dehérain, “L'Exploration de la Haute-Égypte”, p. 259-260.

¹¹ David Prochaska, “Art of Colonialism, Colonialism of Art: The “Description de l'Égypte” (1809-1828)”, *L'Esprit Créateur*, 34/II, 1994, p. 70-71.

¹² Gillispie-Dewachter, *The Monuments of Egypt*, p. 5.

¹³ Armelle Le Goff, “Naturalisme et Diplomatie: Transferts et Échanges avec l'Égypte des Pachas (1825-1869)”, *Bulletin de la Sabix*, 54, 2014, p. 33.

¹⁴ He was a young 26-year-old researcher he set out for the Egyptian expedition on 19 May 1798. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire wrote letters to his friends and described them the places he traveled, battles he saw and people he met, sharing the gossip of the small French community in Egypt and each of their discoveries. His letters from Egypt are a valuable witness to the Napoleon's Campaign. See Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, *L'Expédition d'Égypte. Correspondance (1798-1802). La Visite des Pyramides par le Général Bonaparte. Bonaparte et la Dignité des Sciences. Recherches sur l'Ancienne Memphis. Rapport au Muséum sur les Collections Rapportées d'Égypte*, Paleo Eds, Paris 2012.



assigned to the units under the command of General Louis Marie J. M. Caffarelli du Falga (1756-1799).¹⁵ Military topographers under Cartographer Colonel Jacotin and Medical Corps officers under Doctor René-Nicolas Dufriche Desgenettes and Surgeon D. Jean Larrey¹⁶ were also assigned to this commission.¹⁷ Besides studies for the discovery of Egypt, which was later reflected in *Description de l'Égypte*, the Institute was dedicated to support the French army with a colonial approach that aimed for the technological development of the country.

Eight years after the French soldiers left Egypt, the publication of *Description de l'Égypte* (1809-1828), which presented all the natural riches of Egypt under editorship of Edme-François Jomard (1777-1862),¹⁸ made the country attractive. In fact, Napoleon Bonaparte did not include these young scholars in the campaign for them to author *Description de l'Égypte*; his staff employed them to build roads, bridges, channels and other works and cooperate with their older engineer colleagues, who were assigned military duties, in topography and cartography. In addition, the soldiers' mission was to occupy Upper Egypt and control the road to Syria.¹⁹ However, Egypt turned into a great adventure for them. Besides this, the French appeared as "saviors". Enlightened citizenship feelings supported this cause.²⁰ Of course, we do not claim that this campaign was carried out with intellectual and scientific goals in its center. Nevertheless, Henry Laurens, who worked on the intellectual origins of this campaign, argues that Bonaparte was only the person who accelerated the possibility that was expected to occur for more than a century. The commercial interests of the French in Egypt and Near East were larger than other European powers, and the region was the most important overseas sector for the French commerce after the Caribbean colonies.²¹

In bringing these scientists with him, Napoleon of course thought that their skills would help colonize Egypt, which would be followed by the occupation and submission of the country. For instance, when Napoleon arrived at Cairo, he established Institut d'Égypte, following the example of Institut de France.²² The members of the Institute prepared reports on subjects such as indigo production, sugarcane and cotton farming, which were among Egypt's agricultural revenue sources. These reports increased awareness towards the region's political economy. Producing knowledge regarding Egypt through the Institute served colonial politics. When France's conquest of Egypt is examined through the perspective of Napoleon's power politics, it is often forgotten that the selection of Egypt was no accident, that it happened not in an intellectual vacuum but within the context of French Orientalist works that were at least a century old.²³

It bears reminding that Egyptology and modern Western imperialism grew together. French invasion opened ancient and modern Egypt to Western research. Napoleon's soldiers found the Rosetta Stone, and

¹⁵Andrew Archibald Paton, *A History of the Egyptian Revolution: From the Period of the Mamelukes to the Death of Mohammed Ali; from Arab and European Memoirs, Oral Tradition, and Local Research*, I, Trübner & Company, London 1863, 100-101.

¹⁶René Nicolas-Dufriche Desgenettes, *Histoire Médicale de l'Armée d'Orient*, Bossange, Masson, Besson, Paris 1802.

¹⁷Charles-Roux, "Bonaparte Gouverneur Colonial", p. 292. For instance, there is a note sent by General Janson, one of the French engineers, to General Kléber regarding the shortcomings he found during his observations and inspections at the Alexandria Docks and its engineering during the works to reinforce the defense system of Egypt. See Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives (BOA), Hatt-ı Humâyûn (HAT), 226/12584, (3 Ramadan 1214/ 29 Kânûn-ı sâni 1800).

¹⁸Alain Silvera, "Edme-François Jomard and Egyptian Reforms in 1839", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 7/III, 1971, p. 301-316; Charles Coulston Gillispie "Scientific Aspects of the French Egyptian Expedition 1798-1801", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 133/IV, 1989, p. 447.

¹⁹Louis de Launay, "Gaspard Monge: III: l'Institut d'Égypte", *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1829-1971), 11/I, 1932, p. 127; Gillispie-Dewachter, *The Monuments of Egypt*, p. 2.

²⁰Gillispie-Dewachter, *The Monuments of Egypt*, p. 2. Of course, this view is predominant in western literature. However, there are some alternative perspectives that argue just the opposite. See as an example Halil İbrahim Erol, "Islamic Propaganda by the French During the Occupation of Egypt (1798-1801)", *Istanbul University Journal of Sociology*, 42/I, 2022, p. 163-190.

²¹Henry Laurens, *L'Expédition d'Égypte* (1798-1801), Éditions Points, Paris 2014, p. 17.

²²Said, *Orientalism*, p. 53-54.

²³Prochaska, "Art of Colonialism", p. 73. See also, Namık Sinan Turan, "19. Yüzyılda Fransa'da Şarkiyatçılığın Gelişimi", *Evrensel Kültür*, 272, 2014, p. 54-55.



the English received the Rosetta Stone in 1801 from the French who were leaving Egypt. Thus started the English-French competition in Egyptology, which would last a century and a half. To be clear, decisive turning point in Egyptology competition between the two parties is that French scholar Jean-François Champollion has deciphered the enigma of Rosetta Stone in 1822. In 1820s, the English and French consuls in Cairo – Henry Salt (1780-1827) and Bernardino Drovetti (1776-1852) – were trying to outmaneuver each other to smuggle antiquities from all around Egypt.²⁴ When F. Auguste Ferdinand Mariette (1821-1881) became the founder and first director of the Egyptian Department of Antiquities in 1858, France became the leader in Egyptology²⁵ and managed to maintain this title for 94 years.

2. The Establishment of Institut d'Égypte

Established only two months after the occupation by Napoleon on 22-26 August 1798, Institut d'Égypte's nature and the place it occupies for Egyptian historiography are important. Napoleon's decree on the establishment of this organization is as follows:

*"Article 1 - An institute for the sciences and arts shall be established in Cairo, Egypt. Article 2 - The main purpose of this organization: shall be the advancement and dissemination of the Enlightenment in Egypt, studying, review and publication of Egypt's material, industrial and historical realities, and providing opinions on various subjects that will be consulted by the government."*²⁶

Institut d'Égypte was organized identically to Institut de France, which was established through the law dated 25 October 1795. Bonaparte formed a commission and divided it into two departments. The first of these was chaired by the Egyptian Institute Secretary Joseph Fourier, and the second was chaired by Geometrician Louis Costaz. Each of them prepared a series of questions regarding the agricultural processes, industrial products and the country's history and traditions. Napoleon strived for creating an inventory of Egypt's scientific, economic and cultural riches, disseminating the benefits of the Enlightenment to the country, and bringing back a piece of once radiant civilization.²⁷

The first meeting was held on 23 August 1798 under the chairmanship of Gaspard Monge²⁸ where Napoleon was the Vice-Chairman, Joseph Fourier was the Secretary, and Costaz was the Vice-Secretary. The Institute held its 62nd and final meeting on 22 March 1801. What is interesting is that Napoleon used the title of "Bonaparte, Membre de l'Institut, Général en Chef" when signing the official decrees in Egypt.²⁹ Starting on 23 August, the Institute's meetings were held publicly every five days. In addition, C. Louis Berthollet was carrying out experiments several times a year where everyone could participate.³⁰ In the neighboring properties, a botanical garden, a zoo, a natural history and mineralogy collection, a printing house and the

²⁴Said, *Orientalism*, p. 43, 121; Deborah Manley-Peta Rée, *Henry Salt: Artist, Traveller, Diplomat, Egyptologist*, Libri, London 2001, p. 69, 71, 76, 92-98.

²⁵Donald M. Reid, "Indigenous Egyptology: The Decolonization of a Profession?", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 105/II, 1985, p. 234.

²⁶Jean Leclant, "L'Égyptologie Française sur le Terrain", *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 10, 1998, p. 32-35. <https://www.revuedesdeuxmondes.fr/article-revue/legyptologie-francaise-sur-le-terrain/> (Access on 25 July 2024).

²⁷Pérès, *ibid*, p. 115.

²⁸Monge set out with the units under the command of Civita Vecchia'da Desaix; Bonaparte had assigned him from the Propaganda Office in Vatican to operate the printing house for Arabic, Syrian and Greek typefaces and for the staff who could do typesetting in these languages. Gillispie-Dewachter, *The Monuments of Egypt*, p. 5; Charles-Roux, "Bonaparte Gouverneur Colonial", p. 304.

²⁹Gillispie-Dewachter, *The Monuments of Egypt*, p. 5.

³⁰When the residents of Cairo were convinced that religious matters were not dealt with here, they started coming to these meetings in numbers. Pérès, *ibid*, 114. It is interesting that some of the experiments were ridiculed by Egyptian Azhari scholars. See Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourienne, "The French View of the Events in Egypt", *Napoleon in Egypt: Al-Jabarti's Chronicle of the French Occupation, 1798*, ed. Shmuel Moreh, Markus Wiener Publishers, Princeton 1993, p. 133-166; Thomas Philipp, "The French and the French Revolution in the Works of al-Jabarti", *Eighteenth Century Egypt: The Arabic Manuscript Sources*, ed. Daniel Crecelius-Regina Books, Claremont 1990, p. 127-140.

machine shop of Nicolas Jacques Conté could be found.³¹

Institut d'Égypte had held 62 meetings before English General Abercrombie defeated French Commander Manou at Canope (21 March 1801) and caused the French to leave. The Institute was comprised of 12 mathematicians, ten physicists, six economists, and eight authors or artists.³²

The relationship between Napoleon and the Institute's foundation was arising from Napoleon seeing himself not as a "cruel invader" but as a "representative of civilization" as per the longings of the Egyptian people. A similar claim was mentioned by J. L. Tallien in the introductory text explaining the publication purpose of *La Décade Égyptienne Journal Littéraire et d'Économie Politique* in the first issue of the journal dated September 1798. The first issue of *La Décade Égyptienne* was comprised of articles authored by the members of Institut d'Égypte in Cairo. Tallien was responsible for the publication process.³³ According to Tallien, the "conquest" of Egypt should not only be advantageous for France politically or commercially, but it should also provide advantages in terms of sciences and arts.

*"Now, we no longer live in the times that conquerors know only to destroy the places where they bring their weapons: In those days, they were guided by their ambition to find gold. Today, on the contrary, the French not only respect the law, traditions and habits but also the prejudices of the peoples whom lands they occupy. To time, mind and education, they leave realizing the innovations that are prepared by philosophy and the century-long Enlightenment and the application of which approaches closer with each passing day... Our purpose is not only to introduce Egypt to the French who are currently there but also to France and Europe..."*³⁴

In the mind of its founder, the Egyptian Institute aimed, on the one hand, to work "for introducing all the advancements of the modern civilization" to the shores of the Nile, and on the other, to research, examine and publish all material and tangible assets and documents that could shed light on the history of the first Egyptians or reveal the knowledge there. In the beginning, the Institute, comprising of 36 members, was divided into branches: mathematics, physics, literature and fine arts and political economy.³⁵ Nevertheless, there were also names from the military staff of the campaign that mentioned the intention to bring values of the Enlightenment to this corner of the Mediterranean regarding the establishment purpose of the Institute. For instance, the mission of the Egyptian Institute is described with praise in the memoirs of Colonel Chalbrand:

*"Although the means it uses to win the hearts of the crowds and soften the prejudices of the country for once gives rise to legitimate criticism, there is no one who would not applaud its efforts to disseminate the benefits of the Enlightenment in the region, root out barbarism, and bring back a piece of the civilization that brough great glory to this region. In the mind of its founder, Institut d'Égypte, on the one hand, had the aim of working for introducing all the advancements of the modern civilization to the shores of the Nile, and on the other, researching, examining and publishing all the findings and documents that could shed light on the history of the first Egyptians or reveal the total knowledge there."*³⁶

³¹*Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, I, p. 3; Gillispie-Dewachter, *The Monuments of Egypt*, p. 10, Meira Gold, "Ancient Egypt and the Geological Antiquity of Man, 1847-1863", *History of Science*, 57/II, 2019, p. 205.

³²Edouard de Villiers du Terrage, *Journal et Souvenirs sur l'Expédition d'Égypte, mis en Ordre et Publiés par le Baron Marc de Villiers du Terrage*, E. Plon, Nourrit, Paris 1899, p. 82.

³³Auriant, "Les Origines de l'institut Égyptien", *Journal des Savants*, May 1926, p. 218.

³⁴Jean Lambert Tallien, "prospectus", *La Décade Égyptienne*, I, VI (1799), 6; Also see Pérès, *ibid*, p. 118-119.

³⁵Pérès, "L'Institut d'Égypte", p. 113.

³⁶Colonel Chalbrand, *Les Français en Égypte, ou Souvenirs des Campagnes d'Égypte et de Syrie, par un Officier de l'Expédition*, Ed. Just Jean Étienne Roy, A. Mame, Tours 1874, p. 98-101; *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, I, 1. "Formation de l'Institut d'Égypte", *La Décade Égyptienne*, I, 1798-1799 (VII), p. 9.



The officials of the Institute were selected from the Commission of the Sciences and Arts, and the others from the engineer, artillery and staff officers. For instance, we can include Andréossy, Leroi, Bonaparte, Malus, Costaz, Monge, Fourier, Nouet, Girard, Quesnot, Le Pere, Say, and Lancret as some of the members of the Mathematics Department. Besides that, Berthollet, Champy, Delile, Desgenettes, Dubois, and Savigny were among those who would carry out research in the fields of medicine and natural history. Names such as Bourienne, Desaix, Kléber, Reynier, Sucy, Sulkowsky, and Tallien were among those who would carry out research in the field of political economy. Finally, Denon, Dutertre, Norry, and Parseval de Grandmaison became members of the Institute to carry out studies in the field of literature and fine arts.³⁷ While being the symbol of the studies of the scholars in Egypt, the Institute made certain discoveries in Lower Egypt and around Cairo between 1798-1799. Establishment of a printing house that used Arabic and Latin letters, commissioning of a hospital, and formation of the necessary mechanical shops for the operations of the French army and the engineering committee are accepted as the works of the Egyptian Institute.³⁸

Thus, Napoleon Bonaparte diverted the attention of the Institute towards different subjects that would increase the advantages of occupying Egypt and would contribute to scientific advancement. By putting forth a series of questions, Bonaparte even aimed for the examination or solution of these thanks to the various commissions created under the Institute. The Egyptian Institute decided for the formation of the following commissions:³⁹

- 1- *"A commission shall be responsible for acquiring the truest information regarding viniculture in this region and establish the parts of the region that are most suitable for this viniculture.*
- 2- *The aqueduct that carries the Nile's waters to the castle is greatly damaged; this aqueduct's service is now disrupted, and previously, it has been carrying mediocre amount of waters only with the strength of more than 50 oxen, which were misused. It has been suggested to reward the person who brings the best and most economical project to supply water to the castle.*
- 3- *The commission comprised of the citizens named Delille, Geoffroy, Gloutier, Le Pere, Malus, and Norry shall review whether the enormous pile of monuments that somewhat constitute the periphery of Cairo can be utilized or not.*
- 4- *Citizen Bonaparte insists on the benefits of an observatory and provides the necessary resources for accelerating its creation. Citizen Norry shall meet with Citizen Caffarelli and the astronomers of the Institute to choose an appropriate location. The report shall be presented in the next meeting.*⁴⁰
- 5- *The Gauge or Nilometer could give rise to interesting research in terms of ancient geography and public usage: A commission has been assigned to correctly define this work, remember the historical facts about it, and identify the changes it endured or based on the rising of the riverbed. This commission shall also review whether it is advantageous to place machinery that are moved by the waterflow in this area.*
- 6- *It is suggested that experiments on a series of thermometric and hygrometric observations and slow movements and oscillation of magnetized needle should start as soon as possible.*
- 7- *Two commissions are assigned to excavate wells in various locations of the nearby desert to carefully examine the nature of water and all the incidental conditions.*
- 8- *There are many columns near the aqueduct, which seem to have been used to decorate a public building in the past."*⁴¹

³⁷ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, I, 2, Pérès, ibid, p. 113-114.

³⁸ Fernand Beaucour, "L'Institut d'Égypte et ses Travaux", *Souvenir Napoléonien*, 255, 1970, p. 11-13.

³⁹ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 20-21.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, I, 21.

When Vivant Denon managed to join the units of Desaix chasing Mamluk Murad Bey, he had seen the valley up to the first cataract and drawn the sketches of what he saw. Denon described his observations on Egypt with drawings. It can be understood from Denon's own statements that this was accomplished under hard conditions: "I made most of my drawings on my knees, standing and even on horseback; I could finish none of them as desired; not once I could find a table with good enough legs. Thus, I created my drawings to at least bear the simplicity of the moment and the reality of the nature".⁴²

While the war against the Mamluks continued, a large scientific expedition was carried out from March to October 1799 under the authority of Girard, the Chief Engineer of École nationale des ponts et chaussées. Their mission was to examine the hydrographic network to improve the agricultural produce. Despite their commander's warnings, Prosper Jollois and Edouard de Villiers carried out a series of important studies where they stayed.⁴³ While some among these engineers were busy creating a detailed map of Egypt, others were working on a series of arrangements that would make the Nile travelable every season. For instance, Edme François Jomard was busy with topographic studies in the delta, drew the first detailed maps of Alexandria and Cairo, and expanded his research to the borders of the Upper Egypt and Nubia.⁴⁴ In addition, by carrying out excavations, they started to search for all the remains that could provide historical data. The artists continued to collect everything that could give an idea about customs, traditions, arts and crafts on their canvases and albums. Thus, the scientists and artists combined their works with those of the soldiers throughout the campaign.⁴⁵

The members of the Egyptian Institute were changed after departures and deaths with some new appointments. For instance, Beauchamp, Lenère (architect), Bourienne, Lancret, Larrey, Gorancez, Ripault, Rigo, Kléber, Desaix, Reynier, Boudet, Dugua, Jacotin, and Marce were newer members.⁴⁶ Bonaparte himself determined which areas of expertise would be represented and the number and types of people. He assigned General Caffarelli du Falga, the commander of the Engineers Corp, with supplying technical equipment, maps and books for a library of more than 500 volumes besides his administrative and financial supervision. Monge was busy with creating art collections in Egypt for the benefit of Louvre.⁴⁷

In December 1799, a large expedition was carried out for the exploration of Giza, Saqqara and Memphis, and in January 1801, General Jacques François Menou assigned architect Jean-Baptiste Lepère and engineer Coutelle to carry out excavations and research. When the plates in *Description de l'Égypte*, which would be published later, are examined, we can recognize that the drawings came out of mostly the hands of engineers and architects. Since they were not knowledgeable about the hieroglyphic system, the ancient Egyptian scripture, it was quite hard to reproduce the observed details.⁴⁸ Even so, we see that these studies supported long-term knowledge production and publications in Egypt. From the notes and drawings brought by French scientists and artists, the work named *Description de l'Égypte* was prepared, comprising of nine foil volumes of text and 11 large foil volumes of plates; the first volume was presented to Napoleon, and

⁴¹ *ibid*, I, 21-22; Édouard de Villiers du Terrage, *Journal et Souvenirs sur l'Expédition d'Égypte, mis en Ordre et Publiés par le Baron Marc de Villiers du Terrage*, E. Plon, Nourrit, Paris 1899, p. 82, 86, 87.

⁴² Dehérein, "L'Exploration de la Haute-Égypte", p. 260.

⁴³ Villiers du Terrage, *Journal et Souvenirs*, p. 82, 94-95.

⁴⁴ Silvera, "Edme-François Jomard", p. 301.

⁴⁵ Pérès, *ibid*, p. 115; Jean Edouard Goby, "La composition du I^{er} Institut d'Égypte", *Bulletin de L'institut d'Égypte*, 29, 1948, p. 345-367; Jean Edouard Goby, "La Composition du Premier Institut d'Égypte (suite)", *Bulletin de l'institut d'Égypte*, 30, 1949, p. 81-99.

⁴⁶ De Villiers du Terrage, *Journal et Souvenirs*, p. 82; *Memoirs Relative to Egypt: Written in that Country during the Campaigns of General Bonaparte, in the Years 1798 and 1799, by the Learned and Scientific men who Accompanied the French Expedition: Published in Paris by authority, Institut d'Égypte (1798-1801)*, T. Gillet, London 1800, p. 10.

⁴⁷ Gillispie-Dewachter, *The Monuments of Egypt*, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Leclant, "L'Égyptologie Française sur le Terrain", p. 36.

later volumes were published during the Restoration (after 1815). This work represents the final version of the research conducted by the members of the Commission of the Sciences and Arts.⁴⁹

French started printing and publication works in Egypt by bringing two printing houses with them: Imprimerie Orientale et Française and Imprimerie de Marc Aurel. Thus, the activities of the Institute were preserved with the publications printed in Cairo and put in the service of academia.⁵⁰ One of them, Imprimerie Orientale et Française, commissioned by Jean-Joseph Marcel in June 1798 in Alexandria, moved to Cairo in 1798 and changed its name to Imprimerie Nationale in January 1799.⁵¹

Between the dates of 29 August 1798 and 20 June 1801, we can see *Courrier de l'Égypte*, which was known as the propaganda newspaper of Napoleon in Egypt and published selected news for the campaign units, among the publication of the Institute.⁵² In addition, from 1 October 1798 to 31 March 1800, *La Décade Égyptienne* was published as a scientific journal allocated for the memoirs and reports of the Institute members.⁵³ Finally, *Mémoires sur l'Égypte* was published by the Egyptian Institute during the military campaigns of Napoleon Bonaparte between 1798-1799. In addition, *Memoirs* was published as four volumes between 1799-1801, and the first volume was translated into English in 1800, when Bonaparte's units were blockaded by Nelson's fleet.⁵⁴

The foundation of Institut d'Égypte and studying and reporting of Egypt's economy, natural resources and cultural riches through commissions in *Mémoires sur l'Égypte* are important. Therefore, the relationship between the Institute and *Mémoires* is one of the most important sources regarding the colonial adventure in Egypt. For instance, the first volume of *Mémoires* include the questions that are requested by Bonaparte to be research in the first meeting of the Institute:

- 1- "Can there be any improvements for the bakeries that bake bread for the soldiers in terms of fuel consumption, and what are these improvements? The examination of this question was assigned to a commission comprising of citizens named Berthollet, Caffrelli, Monge, and Say.
- 2- Is there any way to replace the hops in beer production in Egypt? This subject was referred to a commission comprising of citizens named Berthollet, Costaz, Desgenettes, and Gloutier.
- 3- What are the most common ways of purifying and rejuvenating the waters of the Nile? The work to finding answers to this question was assigned to a committee comprising of citizens Berthollet, Costaz, Monge, and Venture.
- 4- Is it more appropriate to build watermills or windmills in the current condition of Cairo? This was assigned to a committee comprising of citizens Andréossy, Caffarelli, Gostaz, Malus, and Say.
- 5- Does Egypt have resources to produce gunpowder, and what are these resources? This was referred to a committee comprising of citizens Andréossy, Berthollet, Malus, Monge, and Venture.
- 6- What is the status of justice, civil law and criminal law as well as education in Egypt? What kind of improvements can be made in these areas, and what do the people of Egypt want?

⁴⁹Dehérain, "L'Exploration de la Haute-Égypte", p. 265.

⁵⁰Jean Joseph Marcel, *Alphabet Arabe, Turk et Persan, à l'Usage de l'Imprimerie Orientale et Française*, Le Caire, 1798, p. 15-16; Auriant, "Les Origines de l'Institut Egyptien. La société égyptienne (1836-1859)", *Journal des Savants*, 1926, p. 217.

⁵¹Turgut Kut, "Bulak Matbaası", *DiA*, 6, 1992, 387-388.

⁵²*Courrier de l'Égypte*, Institut d'Égypte, Le Kaire, 1798-1801.

⁵³*La Décade Égyptienne*, I, Institut d'Égypte, Le Kaire, 1798-1799; II, 1799; III, 1799-1800; IV, 1800.

⁵⁴See *Memoirs Relative to Egypt. Written in that Country during the Campaigns of General Bonaparte, in the years 1798 and 1799, by the Learned and Scientific Men who Accompanied the French Expedition*, I, R. Phillips, London 1800.

The commission responsible for collection and review of the knowledge necessary for the answers to these questions is comprised of citizens named Costaz, Sucy, and Tallien.”⁵⁵

At the meeting dated 11 April 1799, Citizen Antoine François Andréossy presented a report on the production of gunpowder in Egypt and Monge presented a report on the optical phenomenon called mirage by the sailors. At the meeting, another commission comprising of Costaz, Geoffroy and Malues to prepare tables that compare the weight and measurement units in Egypt and France. A commission comprising of Desgenettes, Shulkouski (Joseph Sulkowski 1770-1798) and Jean Lambert Tallien was formed to create an Arabic-French dictionary to make the French soldiers and civil servants communicate with the Egyptian people as required by the common life.⁵⁶ Thus, we see that all tangible and intangible cultural assets in Cairo, and in general, in Egypt were put under examination.

Answers to Napoleon's questions to the Institute continued to be submitted as reports. Bonaparte also gave instructions to the Institute to prepare an almanac. Beauchamp, Monge, Nouet and D. Raphael were responsible for preparing the draft for this almanac. The almanac, which was to be prepared with a triple-index, would include the calendar and time divisions based on the usage by the French, Copts and Muslims.⁵⁷ In the meantime, Fourier presented the report he prepared on the solutions of algebraic equations. Desgenettes provided information about the health issues of the Egyptians during this meeting. Desgenettes also started by reminding that a year should be divided into seasons as per the observations of Prosper Alpin. Dr. Alpin divided a year into four seasons. Based on this, the spring included the months of January and February; the summer lasted six months and was divided into two very different sections with first section being the months of March, April, and May, and the second being the months of June, July, and August; the autumn included the months of September and October; and the winter included the months of November and December. Besides this Desgenettes described the diseases specific to each of these seasons. He emphasized that the army struggled with only three diseases during the end of the summer season: ophthalmia, diarrhea and dysentery. He had gathered much empirical data about these diseases. He linked the major cause behind the last two diseases to the frequent changes in temperature.⁵⁸ The observations of Desgenettes regarding the common diseases found in the country and his opinions regarding the treatment of such diseases introduced modern medical practices to Egypt. Of course, the main purpose here was primarily to protect the health of the French soldiers.⁵⁹

For the French, topography was a cause of physical and medical concern, and the purpose of the 18th century medicine was to balance men's, women's and children's physiologies with the environment. The expedition's chief physician was Nicolas Desgenettes and chief surgeon was Dominique Jean Larrey. On the unhealthy environment in Egypt and its remedies, Desgenettes authored the work named *Topographie Physique et Médicale de l'Égypte* which also included a collaboration with the astronomer Nicolas-Antoine Nouet. Throughout the occupation, Desgenettes gathered data on the population dynamics of Egypt, compiled the necrology of Cairo during the three years when the French held the control, and wrote the military medical text that established policies for cleaning, public health and the organization of hospitals.⁶⁰ D. Jean Larrey mostly wrote about diseases. He made the clinical definitions of diseases such as ophthalmia

⁵⁵ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, I, p. 3-4.

⁵⁶ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 4-5.

⁵⁷ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 9.

⁵⁸ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 9-11.

⁵⁹ René-Nicolas Dufriche Desgenettes, *Histoire Médicale De L'armée D'orient*, Bossange, Masson, Besson, Paris 1802, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Gillispie, "Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign", p. 85

(generally, trachoma), bubonic plague, tetanus, yellow fever, leprosy, lymphedema and gigantism.⁶¹

Citizen Berthollet reported on the processes used for the indigo production, which was an important source of income in Egypt at the time. He was interested in the trade, cultivation and production of indigo with certain changes and sent a sample of the product. A committee comprised of Berthollet, Costaz and Descostils was asked to prepare a report about this subject. The report prepared by Descostils argued that the methods used in Egypt and not yet preferred by any of the researchers could provide a preferable indigo, albeit it could be of lower quality.⁶²

The Institute could discuss several topics at a single meeting. For instance, at an Institute meeting, Dr. Larrey was asked his opinions regarding ophthalmia, commonly seen in Egypt, and after that, Beauchamp presented his journey from Istanbul to Trabzon as a report, and even Beauchamp's observations were discussed.⁶³ On the other hand, Dolomieu argued that the sea level had changed since the Ptolemaic Era and rose approximately two feet.⁶⁴ D. S. Guy Tancred de Gratet de Dolomieu informed the Institute regarding the measures he thought should be taken for the selection, protection and transportation of the antiquities. Citizen Nectoux presented to the Institute the great advantages of creating a garden dedicated to agriculture for Egypt.⁶⁵ A commission was established to examine Nectoux's report, which was also assigned to collect all the necessary knowledge to develop various types of planting and cultivation. The commission members were Berthollet, Costaz, Delille, Desgenettes, Gloutier, and Tallien.⁶⁶

In the session of 21 September, Nicolas Antoine Nouet presented a guide that brought together the time and calendar sections based on the usage by the French, Copts and Turks.⁶⁷ In addition, Le Pere prepared a minimized map of Alexandria's city plan. This plan, scaled 1:1.000 for each dimension, was examined by the members of the Department of Bridges and Roads alongside engineers and geographers.⁶⁸ On the other hand, the sounding research at the roadside and two ports in Alexandria continued, and a report was prepared on the observations of the advancement of the alluvium and direction and strength of winds. The aim was to compare the results of these studies and realize all the projects geared towards seafaring. Underwater channels and wells that received the waters of Al-Khalidiyah (al-Fayyum) were also examined in detail. Thus, a hydraulic map of the city was created.⁶⁹

In another meeting, Nouet informed the Institute about the surveying of several locations for an observatory that was to be used for astronomy and meteorology by a commission he was a member to.⁷⁰ Dolomieu provided information about the causes of the collapse of the ancient monuments of Alexandria and examined especially the effects on the structure known as the Mosque of One Thousand Columns.⁷¹ It could not withstand the force of nature that slowly destroyed the marble and granite columns used in its construction. The scattered and completely shapeless ruins of the walls of Alexandria were proof of this. According to Dolomieu, the reason behind the destruction of the monuments could be explained through

⁶¹ Gillispie, "Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign", p. 85

⁶² *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 23-24.

⁶³ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 14.

⁶⁴ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 15.

⁶⁵ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 16-17; Lokke, "The French Agricultural Mission", p. 111-117.

⁶⁶ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 17-18.

⁶⁷ Robert Solé, *Les Savants de Bonaparte*, Seuil, Paris 1998, p. 163-164.

⁶⁸ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 19.

⁶⁹ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 19.

⁷⁰ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 24.

⁷¹ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 25.

scientific phenomena and natural conditions as well as the frequent changes in the hygrometric status of the atmosphere.⁷²

In the session of 11 November, Le Pere prepared a report on behalf of a commission that was tasked with recommending the geographical scales that need to be adopted for the plans of the cities and provinces. Review of the drawing of a windmill submitted by Cécile was assigned to a commission comprising of Monge, Le Pere, and Malus. In addition, Geoffroy presented a report regarding the duties of the librarian on behalf of a commission. Later, a vote was called to appoint a librarian, and Louis Ripault was elected. In addition, Geoffroy presented a collection that included reviews of natural history to the Institute in that meeting, and it was decided to preserve these works in the Institute library.⁷³

Bonaparte suggested the creation of a commission to examine the methods used by the Egyptians to cultivate wheat and compare these to those used in Europe, and assigned Dolomieu, Gloutier, and Delille for this.⁷⁴ Some Institute members encountered many incidents where they had to observe the Egyptians' skills in dealing and playing with snakes, and even luring them to themselves. A commission comprising of Desgenettes, Geoffroy and Denon was assigned to examine and report on this issue.⁷⁵

Andréossy had prepared a report that included his investigations in the eastern and northern sections of the old Delta when carrying out surveys at Lake Manzala. Andréossy had explained the then-current state of the lake, the settlements that used to be there, the city of Manzala, the neighboring regions of the lake, the agriculture and methods used there, and the causes behind the formation of Lake Manzala.⁷⁶ In addition, Savigny prepared a report on natural history and catalogued different species of animals and especially insects that he observed during that period in Lower Egypt. Also, he tried to explain the decrease in the diversity of species in that region. Sacy had made some observations on the causes of the regular flooding of the Nile. He suggested a commission should collect information about the natural and civilization history of Abyssinia and Nubia as well as the flow of the Nile's upper waters. Thus, Beauchamps, Costaz, Dolomieu, Geoffroy, and Sacy assigned to that commission.

3. Warfare and Scientific Discovery: Commanders and Scientists

The place of L. C. Antoine Desaix (1768-1800) in the Egyptian Campaign within intellectual history is only secondary to his military role. He was a member of the Egyptian Institute, but he did not participate in the studies. Desaix, interested in the antiquities of Upper Egypt just like the artworks in Italy, did not submit any reports to the Institute, unlike many other commanders and executives. His real role was limited to the protection of the members of the Commission des Sciences et Arts that traveled to the Egyptian provinces under his command. He was assigned to provide a secure environment for scientific studies. For his services, he was conferred the title of "warrior philosopher" after his death.⁷⁷

During this period, the works of Vivant Baron Denon (1747-1825), one of Napoleon's artists, materialized Egypt in the eyes the common French. Through his paintings, Egypt transformed from a mythical realm into a real country. Vivant Denon could journey to Lower and Upper Egypt thanks to the expeditions of the French

⁷² *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 26.

⁷³ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 27-28; De Villiers du Terrage, *Journal et Souvenirs*, p. 19, 30, 42.

⁷⁴ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 29; Lokke, "The French Agricultural Mission", 112.

⁷⁵ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 29.

⁷⁶ *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, p. 31-32.

⁷⁷ Patrice Bret, "Le 'Guerrier Philosophe' Desaix, L'Institut D'Égypte et La Commission des Sciences et Arts", *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, 324, 2001, p. 71; Paul Strathern, *Napoleon in Egypt*, Bantam Books, New York 2008, 188, p. 192.

army, and his paintings from this journey turned into a chronicle in which Mamluk Murad Bey described his days in Thebes.⁷⁸

Apart from the support he provided to the scientists and artists during his military assignment in Upper Egypt, Kléber's role in the Institute was as little as Desaix's. Desaix and Kléber had no intellectual duties. Desaix was a short-term member of Institut d'Égypte. 15 months before his election on 21 August 1798, Desaix was included in the member list of the Egyptian Institute by the Committee of Scholars, assigned to prepare the foundation of the Institute by Bonaparte, together with Jean Baptiste Kléber (1753-1800) and Jean-Louis-Ebénézer Reynier (1771-1814).⁷⁹ However, J. L. Ebénézer Reynier submitted several reports to the commissions before becoming a member. Kléber, who was also an architect, was appointed to the Department of Literature and Arts, and Desaix and Reynier were appointed to the Department of Political Economy.⁸⁰ Kléber did not directly participate in the Institute works but founded Commission des Renseignements sur l'État Moderne de l'Égypte (Commission for Information on the Modern State of Egypt). Although it would be very different from what General Jacques François Menou and the First Consul would shape it to be, the members of the Commission of the Sciences and Arts were generally accepted as the founders of *Description de l'Égypte*, as it encouraged them to combine their works into a comprehensive encyclopedia.⁸¹

On the other hand, unlike the commanders, officers, doctors and administrators in his provinces, Desaix did not send a single observer from Upper Egypt and did not participate in the works of the Institute for the four-month period from 10 November 1799, when he was elected to the commission, to March 1800, when he left Egypt.⁸² Still, in the notes taken by Desaix in Egypt, we see that there was the curiosity of an explorer rather than a scientific and artistic excitement.⁸³

Institute's activities were not carried out in a problem-free and easy process.⁸⁴ For instance, there was a revolt in Cairo on 21 October 1798, and Commander Dominique Martin Dupuy (1767-1798) was one of the first victims of this revolt. Thévenot and Duval, both engineers, were killed at the house of Caffarelli they were trying to defend. Many scientific tools of the Institute or commission members were destroyed. There were all kinds of expensive tools to observe the stars and make calculations at the attacked house of General Caffarelli, and these were damaged during the revolt.⁸⁵ In addition, Engineer Tetevides, who led the geographers, was among the killed.⁸⁶ The incident on 21 October showed that the safety of the French scientists was in danger and that the French occupation armies could not protect them.⁸⁷

With the foundation of the Institute, the aim was to make Cairo the scientific, artistic and literary center of Egypt. However, there were Frenchmen who thought it failed this purpose. According to them: "The Western Civilization failed to take root in these lands where only ruins existed. What was occupied by the Frenchmen was not a building but a tent they set up in the middle of their camps, and when we were faced with misfortune and had to leave Egypt, we folded this tent with our luggage: The Institute returned to a desolate

⁷⁸Vivant Denon, *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte*, P. Didot l'Aîné, Paris 1802, p. 48, 82.

⁷⁹Jean Édouard Goby, *Premier Institut d'Égypte. Restitution des Comptes Rendus des Séances*, Impr. Darantiere, De Boccard, Paris 1987, p. xiii-xiv.

⁸⁰Bret, *ibid*, p. 71.

⁸¹Henry Laurens, *L'Expédition d'Égypte, 1798-1801*, Armand Colin, Paris 1989, p. 233-234; De Villiers du Terrage, *Journal et Souvenirs*, p. 243

⁸²Bret, *ibid*, p. 71.

⁸³Philippe Bourdin, "Le Sultan Dévoilé Desaix en Égypte d'Après ses Notes de Campagne", *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, 324, 2001, p. 47-62.

⁸⁴Turc-Wiet, *Chronique*, p. 20.

⁸⁵Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, *History of Egypt*, III, 71, 91.

⁸⁶De Villiers du Terrage, *Journal et Souvenirs*, p. 83.

⁸⁷De Villiers du Terrage, *ibid*, p. 83.

Mamluk palace, the printing house returned to France, and the publications were suspended.”⁸⁸

4. Colonial Knowledge Generation: From *Mémoires sur l'Égypte* to *Description de l'Égypte*

With its longer title *Mémoires sur l'Égypte, Publiés Pendant les Campagnes du Général Bonaparte dans les Années 1798 et 1801* is a four-volume series published by Institut d'Égypte. *Mémoires sur l'Égypte* (Memoirs of Egypt). Comprised of research on different subjects, it is the result of joining together the research conducted by the scientists during Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign. We can count it among the first examples of Egyptology. This series also contains scientific articles previously authored by Western researchers on Egypt and other Arabic geographies. The new edition of the series was published in Paris between 1799-1803 (Years VIII-XI in the French Revolutionary Calendar), and the English translation of the first volume (1798-1799) was printed in London on 31 March 1800.⁸⁹

The Egyptian Institute contained various ancient Egypt collections where libraries, laboratories, workshops and scientists were present. One of the goals of the Institute was to disseminate knowledge, and for that, the scientists published two journals named *Mémoires sur l'Égypte* and *La Decade Égyptienne* as well as a newspaper named *Courier de L'Égypte*.⁹⁰ The first issue of *Courier de L'Égypte* was published on 29 August 1798 by Marc Aurel, one of the close friends of Napoleon. In addition, Editor-in-Chief Joseph Fourier, Costaz, and Desgenettes also contributed. The 116th and final issue was published on 9 June 1801. *Le Courier de l'Égypte* can be described as a Napoleonic propaganda newspaper published by the Egyptian Institute to support the military power, goals and the morale of troops in the Egyptian Campaign.⁹¹

Mémoires sur l'Égypte was not divided into chapters and was edited as a single chapter where a certain research manuscript would be followed by another research topic. These series can be seen as primary sources and as a collection of various studies compiled from incidents experienced since they also include the observations of Western researchers who witnessed the Egyptian Campaign. The contributions of *Mémoires sur l'Égypte* for the Egyptology are important. However, the editing style of the research papers in the series and the non-systematic manner of identifying research topics should also be noted. On the other hand, we see that general themes are dominant in *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*. For instance, military reports, discoveries related to the Egyptian topography or explanations about colonial issues are some of these. Subjects such as military reports, current information on weapons and the advancement of the campaign and even medical findings and observations of the military personnel are sometimes quoted in the research manuscripts. The “Table of Contents” section of the first volume that we have reviewed as a sample in fact shows that no particular goal was followed when addressing topics or themes:

“Foundation of the Egyptian Institute.

List of Institute Members

Summary of Institute Meetings and Works.

A Quote from the Report Submitted to the Institute by Citizen Andréossy on the Production of Niter and Gunpowder in the Country.

⁸⁸Auriant, “Les Origines de l'institut Égyptien”, p. 218.

⁸⁹T. Gillet, *Memoirs Relative to Egypt Published during the Campaigns of Napoleon Bonaparte in the Years 1798 and 1799*, Paris 1800; Charles-Roux, “Bonaparte Gouverneur Colonial”, p. 304.

⁹⁰Louis de Laus de Boisy, “The Institute of Egypt”, *Napoleon: Symbol for an Age, A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Rafe Blaufarb, Bedford, St. Martin's, New York 2008, p. 45-48.

⁹¹De Villiers du Terrage, *Journal et Souvenirs*, p. 74.



Citizen Desgenettes, "Report on an Appropriate Plan to Eastern Army Physicians in Order to Draw Egypt's Physical and Medical Topography"

The Report Submitted by Citizen Norry on the 7th Year of 6 Vendémiaire on the Pompei Column.

The Report by Citizen Gaspard Monge on the Optical Phenomenon Known as the Mirage.

Citizen Geoffroy's Observations on the Wings of Ostriches.

Observations on Arabian Desert Horses".⁹²

The differences in article subjects and methods are striking. This was probably since some individuals in the expedition had different academic backgrounds. Researchers can be divided into experts in the fields of archaeology and art history and experts in life sciences and military subjects. Geographical discoveries regarding Egypt include research related to directions, topography and terrain or location. Among some articles in the first volume of the series, "Observations on Arabian Desert Horses" and "An Agricultural Organization Plan in Egypt" can be counted within this context. The common tendency we see in many of these texts is that they were not written in the academic style we see in today's Western academia. A theme that we encounter within the series is the observations and reports regarding France's colonial subjects in Egypt. These are, for instance, "An Arabian Ode on the Conquest of Egypt" and "On Coptic Monasteries". These discuss the beliefs of Egyptians and rituals related to those beliefs.⁹³

Collected in four volumes, *Mémoires sur l'Égypte* series created an important foundation for *Description de l'Égypte*. The collection of various studies and observations carried out during Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign were published from 1809 to 1829 in 37 volumes and were submitted to the French government together with other studies of the period. Nevertheless, *Description de l'Égypte*, which started to be published in 1809, is comprised of ten foil volumes that include 837 copper gravures and most of these include more than 3000 illustrations. An additional atlas was allocated to a 50-page topographical review of Egypt and Syria (Bilad al-Sham) and some regions of Palestine. Nine volumes, each of which is 800 pages on average, of memoirs, depictions and interpretations in the first edition complete this illustrative material. In the second edition, these were published as 26 octavo volumes. The text and illustrations of *Description de l'Égypte* are divided into three thematic groups: (1) "Antiquités (Antiquities)" that include five volumes of plates related to Ancient Egypt; (2) "État Moderne (Modern State)" that include the two volumes of plates that cover the period from Arabian conquest to French occupation (three books); and (3) "Histoire Naturelle (Natural History)" that include two volumes of plates regarding the natural history of the Nile Valley and Red Sea Shores (in three books). The reason behind *Description de l'Égypte*, or in other words, such a voluminous collection of research results and knowledge on Egypt is an object of interest.⁹⁴

In *Description de l'Égypte*, some author names are accompanied by one or more references regarding the said author's rank, title or status. In 1806, the French Minister of the Interior requested the list of those helped *Description de l'Égypte*, and on 19 August, a list of these names, divided into two categories as specifically paid or unpaid by the government, was submitted. In the first category, the names of ten individuals are followed by their title "Member of the Egyptian Institute". These names are Collet-Descotils, Dutertre, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Girard, Jacotin, Lancret, Jacques-Marie Le Père, Protain, Redouté, and Savigny. The names of the other 12 individuals are not followed by a title. These are Balzac, Cécile, Chabrol, Corabeuf,

⁹²*Mémoires sur l'Égypte, Publiés Pendant les Campagnes du Général Bonaparte*, I, Impr. de P. Didot l'ainé, VIII-XI (1799-1802).

⁹³See *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, I, VIII (1799).

⁹⁴*Description de l'Égypte, ou Recueil des Observations et des Recherches qui ont Été Faites en Égypte Pendant l'Expédition de l'Armée Française*, First Edition, 22 Volumes, Imprimerie Impériale, Paris 1809-1828; 2nd Edition, 26 volumes of text, 11 volumes of plates, one volume Carte topographique, C. L. F. Panckoucke, Paris 1821-1830; Charles C. Gillispie, "The Scientific Importance of Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign", *Scientific American*, 271/III, 1994, p. 78-85.

Dupuis, Jollois, Legentil, Raige, Rozière, de Villiers du Terrage, Villoteau, and Jean-Baptiste Lepère. Finally, Jomard's name is accompanied by the title "Secretary of the Society (Secrétaire de la Société)".⁹⁵

The archaeological plates in the first chapter of *La Description de l'Égypte*, which comprise more than half of the wealth of illustrations in total, brought together the first modern vision on the Egyptian Antiquity and French enthusiasts. Europeans started to examine the Nile Valley, envisioning the diversity and details of these gravures. Previously, the Western awareness regarding the Land of Pharaohs was based on the scale and orientation of the Pyramids or the rumors about the Sphinx. The most important development caused by the Napoleonic Campaign was the presentation of measurable and observable knowledge about Egypt rather than a mythical or epic rhetoric. We see that before 1798, the information regarding Upper Egypt was also limited. Therefore, the expeditions of Armée de l'Orient there were important.⁹⁶

Those who contributed to *La Description de l'Égypte* drew all the monuments in the south, starting with the Philae Island. Throughout the road, they made drawings, took measurements and carried out excavations, and moving down from Kom Ombo and Edfu, respectively on the right and left banks of the Nile, they passed through Esna. In this expedition, the members of the Commission of the Sciences and Arts had no guide but the ancient historians and geographers Herodotus, Strabo and Diodorus to understand and interpret the importance of what they saw. Still, when faced with many reliefs and hieroglyphs, the engineers copied these identically, preserving the proofs of scripts and structures that have since been lost as in many instances. For instance, the Isis Temple across Esna on the shores of the Nile was destroyed in 1828, during the rule of Mehmed Ali Pasha.⁹⁷ This temple became known through the drawings that were made during the Napoleonic Campaign.

The second chapter of *La Description de l'Égypte* was more related to the country's state at the end of the 18th century. A large portion of the text is comprised of memoirs, observations and studies on topography. The engineer units, who carried out the traverses created by the maps, had a mission beyond mere cartography. The cartographers, who travelled to every village throughout the Delta in Upper Nile, were instructed to carry out a census-like count, to report the number of residents and families, their statuses and occupations, types of agriculture, number of horses and camels, animal husbandry practices, types of trade and industry, quarries, oases, channels, aqueducts, means of transport and communication as well as the ethnic and religious characteristics of both the sedentary and nomadic peoples.⁹⁸ This information was needed first and foremost by the French colonial administration.

There are studies among the memoirs and monographs included in the second chapter of *La Description de l'Égypte*, which encompass subjects that could be classified as social sciences or humanities of today. Among these were the disciplines that were new at the time, such as anthropology (both cultural and physical), demographics, meteorology, political science, sociology, geopolitics, microeconomics, medieval history, administrative history, linguistics, and musicology. The authors of these were also engineers, scientists and soldiers.⁹⁹

Beyond a compilation of knowledge on Egypt, the importance of participation of science in a military campaign lies within the relationship established between official knowledge and politics. Different from the previous commercial colonialism, the occupation of Egypt had a cultural component. Technical competency

⁹⁵Jean-Édouard Goby, "La composition du premier Institut d'Égypte" *Bulletin de l'institut d'Égypte*, issue 30, 1947, p. 86-88.

⁹⁶Dominique-Vivant Denon, *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte, Pendant les Campagnes du Général Bonaparte*, Impr. de P. Didot l'Aîné, Paris 1802, p. 147.

⁹⁷Gillispie, "Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign", p. 80.

⁹⁸Gillispie, *Ibid*, p. 85.

⁹⁹Gillispie, *Ibid*, p. 85.

was at the forefront of culture and caused the superior to act as the educator or the bringer of culture. The French army was also trying to bring French science to the shores of the Nile. French exceptionalism shows itself here, because the English in India, the Dutch in Indonesia, the Spanish and Portuguese in Americas, and imperialism in general, never attempted such a thing.¹⁰⁰ The dissemination of European science and its extensions within African and Asian societies under the patronage of military conquest and political power started with the French occupation of Egypt.

Conclusion

Napoleonic occupation of Egypt was the harbinger of the colonial occupation and competition in the African lands of the Ottoman Empire throughout the 19th century. Nevertheless, the French occupation of Algeria in 1830 and Tunisia in 1881 and the English occupation of Egypt in 1882 and Sudan in 1889 are examples of these. The colonial institutions created following these occupations and their functions have not been fully investigated. This study focuses on the activities of the Egyptian Institute as a colonial, orientalist institution that was established after the occupation.

Following year 1798, during the occupation, Egypt witnessed the practice of European sciences, which were embodied by the members of Bonaparte's Commission des Sciences et des Arts and the newly established Institut d'Égypte. One month after the Battle of the Pyramids, Gaspard Monge, Claude-Louis Berthollet and Jean-Baptiste Fourier were the first striking names in the scientific commission of Napoleon and had important roles in the Egyptian Institute that was established as the colonial adaptation of the Institute of France. It held its first meeting on 23 August 1798 under the chairmanship of Gaspard Monge, where Napoleon was the Vice-Chairman, Josep Fourier was the Secretary, and Costaz was the Vice-Secretary. It held its 62nd and final meeting on 22 March 1801. According to French thesis is the purposes of the Institute were to enlighten Egypt, advise the Egyptian government and examine the history, industry, culture and nature of the country. As with the aims of the Institute, bringing along scholars to a military expedition fit with the spirit of the Enlightenment, but it was obvious that the real concern of Napoleon was based on practical reasons. His scholars had the skills that could be useful for an invasion army. Many were engineers who could build bridges and castles, and others could produce everything the army would need. Indeed, scientific and cultural tools for the colonial occupation were at the service of the French army through the institute.

The company of French scientists and engineers to the invasion army and the transportation of the Nile's ancient research through their works lies in the background of the emphasis on the scientific importance of Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign. Besides the works for the discovery of Egypt, the Institute was determined to support the French army with a colonialist attitude that also aimed for the technical improvement of the country. Therefore, the publication activities of the Institute between 29 August 1798 and 20 June 1801 are significant. *Courrier de l'Égypte*, the propaganda newspaper of Napoleon and one such leading publication effort, is known for its selected news for the campaign units. From 1 October 1798 to 31 March 1800, the memoirs and reports of the Institute members were published in the scientific journal *La Décade Égyptienne*. In addition, there is also *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, published during the Napoleon's military campaigns of 1798 and 1799.

The most famous finding of the expeditions carried out while the military campaign was ongoing is the Rosetta Stone, which is still in the British Museum today. When the French were leaving Egypt towards the end of 1801, they delivered the stone to the English forces. The Commission had carried out important scientific

¹⁰⁰Gillispie, Ibid, p. 85.

activities in the Land of the Pharaohs. *La Description de l'Égypte*, which included, besides archaeological research and natural history of the region, research on physical and chemical phenomena and reviews of the sociology of an exotic country, was created.



Even though occupying this fertile Ottoman province to the south of the Mediterranean and northeast of Africa was a strategic and diplomatic move, it made it essentially visible in the eyes of the Westerners through the activities of scientists and artists. With its local features, ancient heritage and Islamic civilization, Egypt had now become the research field of science and adventurers. Therefore, *La Description de l'Égypte*, published between 1809-1828, has a meaning that is beyond being the handbook of a colonialist in Egypt. This encyclopedia was divided into three main chapters: Ancient Egypt, Modern Egypt, and Natural History. *Description de l'Égypte* can be considered as a guide to Egypt for both the French scientists and the francophones.

The occupation of Egypt by Bonaparte in 1798 was given meaning to signal “a turning point and start of the modern age” in Middle Eastern historiography. When we consider this historical event from the French or European historiography’s point of view, it can be understood that this was carried out with two missions: colonial expansion and bringing the virtue and accumulation of the Enlightenment to “backward peoples”. In this part of the century, colonialism did not adopt a religious duty towards the countries and societies it invaded like bringing Christianity to South America. Instead, it adopted the goal of an all-out civilizing mission. Therefore, the occupation armies were accompanied by scientists, engineers, artists, libraries and laboratories. In this century, where the Enlightenment thought classified the world and especially the humanity as advanced civilizations and others, it showed that the superior party justified itself in shaping or rearranging the society that it thought to be backwards. The most important consequence of the Napoleonic occupation for the Egyptians was that the country became an international colonial issue after 1798.



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