

Al Masudi's Golden Meadows

“Since the learned men and those who used this writing have disappeared, and Egypt has been occupied by a succession of foreign peoples, the Greek alphabet and writing have prevailed. As the Copts became familiar with this writing, they used it and combined the letters with those of their own alphabet; from their contact with the Greeks, resulted in a writing related both to Greek and ancient Copt, and thus they lost the understanding of the writing of their ancestors.”

Mas'ûdi, *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems* (Extract from Ref: 24).quoted at <http://www.ancient-wisdom.co.uk/ghizahistoricaccounts.htm>

The Akbar-Ezzeman MS, by Masoudi, in the Bodleian, at Oxford, was so much decayed, that recourse has been had to the works of other authors, who have given the same account in nearly the same words - namely, to Makrizi, who quotes from Usted Ibrahim Ben Wasyff Shah; to Soyuti; to a MS (No. 7503) in the British museum, entitled "The Odour of Flowers", or "The Wonders of Different Countries", by Mohammed Ben Ayas; to a Turkish "History of Egypt" MS. (7861) in the British Museum, written 1089 AH; and to Yakut, MS in the Bodleian Library.

“The Egyptians set much store by astrology. The study of the stars foretold a catastrophe that would destroy their country. Not knowing whether it would happen through fire, water or the sword and fearing for the obliteration of their science by this catastrophe, they sought to palliate to such a fate as follows. They built temples (berba) there to store their knowledge in the shape of figures, statues, inscriptions which they made either of clay or of stone [...]. Should the disaster be fire, the clay artefacts would withstand it, if water, the stone would. Disaster struck with the sword: a king invaded Egypt and massacred its entire people. Or else it was a murderous epidemic. At Abu al-Kum (district of Tennis) heaps of bodies are being exhibited. Similarly in upper and lower Egypt bodies stored up in the depth of caves have been found, one on top of the other, in enormous catacombs: neither the Christians nor the Jews nor the Muslims recognise them as their own. They are still dress and their jewels are often taken away.”

Masudi (abridged)

The course translator's rendering of Mas'ûdi, *Les Prairies d'Or [Golden Meadows]* in the French translation by Barbier de Meynard et Pavet de Courteille, revised and completed by Charles Pellat, *Société Asiatique, Collection d'ouvrages orientaux*, 2 vol., Paris, 1962.