

## BOOK REVIEW

THORKILD HANSEN, *Arabia Felix*, English translation London, 1964. Originally published Copenhagen, 1962.

In 1761 a Danish expedition left Copenhagen on a tour which was to take its members, or rather those who survived, through the Mediterranean to Asia Minor, Suez, Bombay, Arabia and home again across Europe. On the way they collected a great deal of historical and scientific information.

The book is of particular interest to students concerned with Maltese studies for in June 1761 the expedition spent several days at Malta. In fact Hansen's book gives very little direct information about the island but some members of the expedition made copious observations and their diaries and notebooks are preserved, in some cases published. The author indicates these sources. One member of the expedition, apart from describing Valletta 'compiled a Flora Melitensis, which included 87 different plants; he described the big salt-extraction installations on the coast, studied the island's trade and discovered how the Maltese brought snow from the mountain tops of Sicily'. Another man made measurement of latitude and longitude which resulted in Malta's position on the map being corrected.

Clearly the expedition collected important information on late eighteenth century Malta and it would be useful if some further research was undertaken on the topic.

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