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Preliminary Account and Results of the Expedition of Dr. Richard Lepsius to Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai.*

In the year 1842, in accordance with the proposal of Eichhorn, at that time Minister of Instruction, and at the recommendation of M. M. Alexander, V. Humboldt, and Bunsen, his Majesty King Frederic William 4th, of Prussia, determined to send a scientific expedition to investigate the remains of ancient Egyptian and Ethiopian civilization still in preservation in the Nile valley and the adjacent countries. The direction of the undertaking was entrusted to me, after the detailed plans of the proposed expedition had been minutely examined by the Royal Academy of Sciences, and in all points graciously approved by the King.

The land-surveyor, G. Erbkam, from Berlin, and the draughtsmen and painters, Ernest and Max Weidenbach, from Naumberg, and J. Frey, from Basle, were appointed to make the drawings and colored representations, as well as those architectonic plans, which had to be executed on the spot. When J. Frey was obliged to return to Europe from Lower Egypt, on account of the injurious climate, he was replaced by the painter O. Georgi, from Leipzig. Two English artists, also J. Bonomi, who, from the interest he took in the journey, became attached to our party while we were in London, and the architect J. Wild, who joined us of his own accord, took an active part in the expedition as long as it remained in Lower Egypt. Lastly, during nearly the whole of the journey we enjoyed the society of the present Counsellor of Legation, H. Abeken, who accompanied us voluntarily and on an independent footing, and who in various ways promoted the antiquarian objects of the journey. We were also provided with the means of obtaining plaster casts of those representations that were best qualified for the purpose, by the addition of Franke the moulder.

The different members of the expedition arriving by various roads, met in Alexandria on the 18th September, 1842. On the 9th November we encamped near the great Pyramids of Gizeh. What we obtained on that spot as well as from the adjoining Pyramid fields of Abusir, Saqara, and Dasher, which are situated to the south, occupied us exclusively and uninterruptedly for more than six months. The inexhaustible number of important and instructive monuments and representations which we met with in these Necropoli, the most ancient that have existed in any country, surpassed every expectation we had been entitled to hold concerning them, and accounts for our long abode in this part of the country, which is the first approached and visited, but has, notwithstanding, been very little investigated. If we except the celebrated and well known examination of the Pyramids in the year 1837, by Colonel Howard Vyse, assisted by the accomplished architect Perring, little had been done to promote a more minute investigation of this remarkable spot; the French-Tuscan expedition in particular did little more than pass through it. Nevertheless, the innumerable tombs of private individuals grouped about those royal Pyramids, partly constructed of massive square blocks, partly hewn into the living rock, contain, almost exclusively, representations belonging to the old Egyptian Monarchy, which

terminated between two and three thousand years before Christ; indeed, most of them belong to the fourth and fifth Manethonic Dynasties, therefore between three and four thousand years before Christ. The wonderful age of these Pyramids, and of the surrounding tombs, is no longer generally denied by intelligent enquirers, and in the first volume of my "Egyptian Chronology," which has lately appeared, I have endeavoured to furnish a critical proof of the certain foundations we possess for a more special determination of time as far back as that period. But were any one only to believe in the lowest acceptation of modern scholars concerning the age of the first Egyptian Dynasties, he would still be compelled to yield priority to those monuments before any other Egyptian remains of art, and generally before all artistic remains belonging to the whole race of man, to which we can historically refer. It is only to this that we can attribute the wonderful growth in the interest which we attach partly to the monuments themselves, as proofs of the earliest activity shewn in art, partly to the various representations of the manner of living in those primitive times.

On the western border of the desert, which stretches from the most northerly groups of Pyramids at Abur Roasch, past the ruins of the old capital of Memphis, to the Oasis-peninsula of the "Faium," we discovered the remains of sixty-seven Pyramids, which with a few exceptions, were only destined for kings, and in the neighbourhood of the principal groups we investigated still more minutely 130 tombs of private individuals, which deserve to be more particularly recorded. A great many of these sepulchral chambers, richly adorned with representations and inscriptions, could only be reached by excavations. Most of them belonged to the highest functionaries of those flourishing Dynasties, among whom were also thirteen princes and seven princesses.

After we had taken the most careful topographical plans of all the fields of the Pyramids, and had noted down the architectonic ground plans, and sections of the most important tombs, and after we had, in the most complete manner, drawn or taken paper impressions of their pictures and inscriptions, as far as they were accessible to us, we had accomplished more completely than we ever hoped to do, the first and most important task of our journey, since we had acquired a basis for our knowledge concerning the monuments of the oldest Egyptian Monarchy.

On the 19th May, 1843, we proceeded still farther, and encamped on the 23rd in the Faium, upon the ruins of the Labyrinth. Its true position was long ago conjectured; and our first view dissipated all our doubts concerning it. The interesting discovery of the actual site of the ancient Lake Moeris was made about the same time, by the distinguished French architect Linant, which we had the opportunity of confirming on the spot. This greatly facilitated the means of comprehending the topographical and historical conditions of this province, so remarkable in all its features. The magnificent schemes which converted this originally desolate Oasis into one of the most productive parts of Egypt, were intimately connected with each other and must have belonged, if not to a single king, still to one epoch of time. The most important result we obtained by our investigations of the Labyrinth and of the adjoining Pyramids, was the determination of the historical position of the original founder; this we obtained by excavations which occupied a considerable time. We discovered that the king, who was erroneously called Moeris by the Greeks, from Lake Mere, (i.e.) from the Lake of the Nile inundation, lived at the end of the 12th Manethonic Dynasty, shortly before the invasion of the Hyksos, and was called Amenemhe by Manetho Amenemes the third of his name. His prede-

* Extracted from "Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai," by Dr. Richard Lepsius.