

Images of the past

3.- The great scientific expeditions

Scholars were in need of exhaustive documentation about monuments, inscriptions and all kinds of ancient objects to develop their knowledge of

Egyptian language, history and religion. This led to several state-sponsored expeditions with scientific purposes. The first such expedition was organized by Napoleon, who also created a Scientific and Artistic Commission. The late publication of *Description de L’Egypte* by the Commission paved the way to the new science of Egyptology.



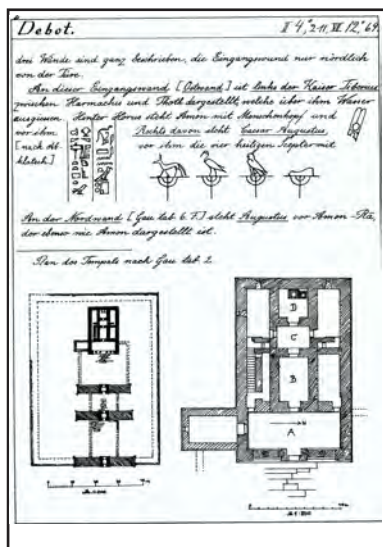
Napoleón

France and the Grand Dukedom of Tuscany organised a second expedition that reached Egypt in 1826. It was headed by Jean François Champollion, who had deciphered the Egyptian hieroglyphs in 1822-1824, and Ippolito Rosellini, considered the founder of Egyptology in Italy. This expedition went as far as the second cataract. Champollion and Rosellini visited the Debot Temple on February 1, 1829 and spent several hours making notes and copying texts and reliefs. Thus, the inscriptions of the temple were read again after many centuries of oblivion. Champollion and Rosellini correctly identified the Nubian King Tabriqo (now read Adikhalamani) as the founder of the chapel with the reliefs and discovered that the temple had been devoted to the god Amun.



Champollion notes

The last of the great expeditions was organized by the King of Prussia and headed by Karl Richard Lepsius in 1842-1849. Methodically planned and with an abundance of resources available, the expedition collected a huge amount of accurate information on Egyptian and Sudanese monuments that remains useful to egyptologists even today.



Lepsius, 1843-44

The Prussian expedition visited the Debot Temple on two occasions, first on November 6, 1843 on the way to Sudan and then on August 30, 1844 when they were travelling back north. Lepsius did a precise and detailed work in the temple, where he copied the texts and reliefs and corrected some of Champollion’s conclusions.