

## The HEMPRICH-EHRENBERG Expedition to Egypt and Asia Minor of 1820—25\*

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With 1 map in the text

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Dr. Wilhelm HEMPRICH and Dr. Christian EHRENBERG, two trained young zoologists, made an expedition to Egypt and Asia Minor that lasted five years. The expedition was supported by the Prussian government, and brought back an enormous amount of material for the Berlin Museum, among which were twenty-three new species of Scoliidae and innumerable other insects subsequently described by KLUG (1832).

**Libyan Desert:** HEMPRICH and EHRENBERG arrived in Alexandria in September, 1820. Their first excursion, by camel-train, was to the Oasis of Siwa in the Libyan Desert. They returned to Alexandria in December.

**The Nile:** Starting on a journey up the Nile into Nubia (Northern Sudan) they reached Cairo on February 3rd, 1821, and there they remained at a suburb on the Nile called Bulak until the end of September. During this time they made excursions to Gizeh and in late April to Sacchara near Memphis. HEMPRICH returned to Alexandria for a period during the summer. They left Cairo at the end of September, traveling sometimes with camels, sometimes by barks. On October 9th they were in Siout (Asyut) and by Oct. 27 in Luxor. The 10th of November saw them at Syene Essuan, now called Aswan, the site of the Great Dam. They reached Wadi Halfa on the border of Nubia before Christmas. With eleven camels and two asses they crossed the district of Suckot, passed the 3rd Cataract, and by mid-February were in the ancient christian kingdom of Dongola. They stopped at Argo Island, and then ten miles farther upstream, at the village Dongola, and by the end of June, 1822, they reached Ambukohl, the furthestmost point of their journey. EHRENBERG remained in Ambukohl until autumn, but Hemprich returned to Cairo which he reached in early August. EHRENBERG, traveling by bark, reached Dongola on October 11th and remained there until November 25th, when he started his return journey north, reaching Cairo on the 21st of January. That winter of 1823 and the ensuing spring the two collectors spent in Cairo, Alexandria, and Damietta on one of the mouths of the Nile. In late April EHRENBERG was on Lake Menzala, near Damietta.

**The Sinai:** By early May the two voyagers returned to Cairo and prepared for their next journey, which was to be to the Sinai Peninsula. Starting from

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The facts, which deal with localities visited and the dates of the visits, have been gleaned from letters published by Dr. STRESEMANN in the reference cited at the end of this paper.

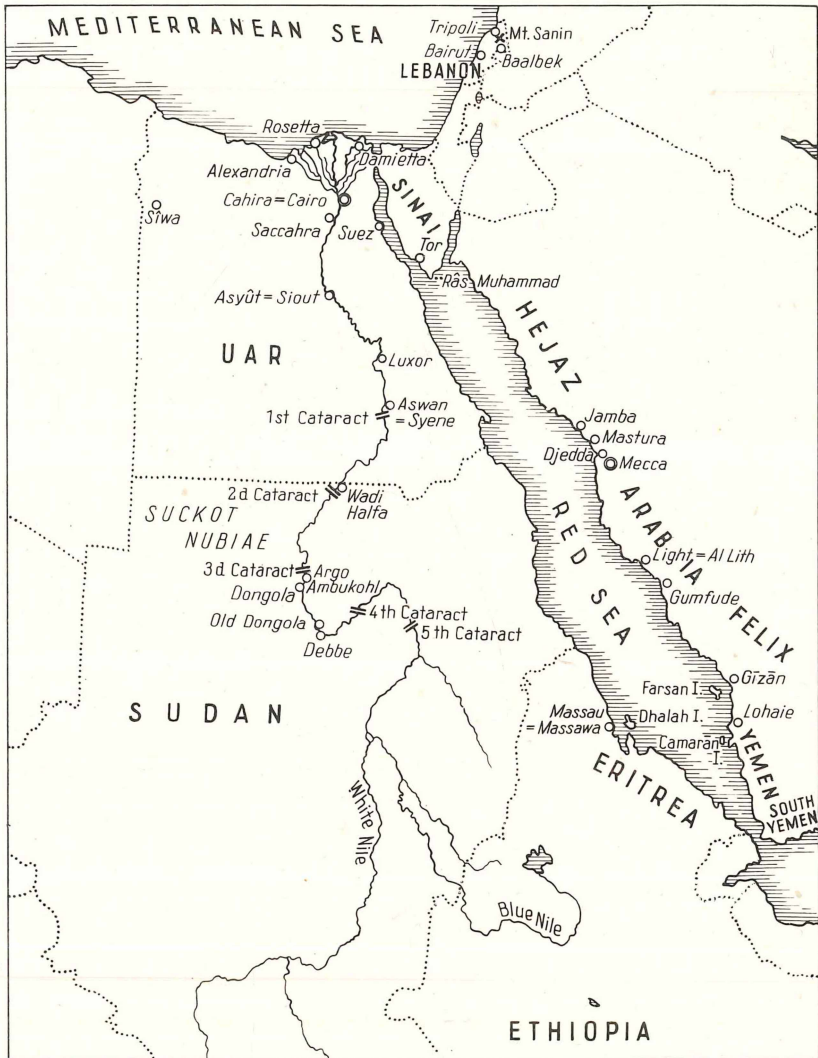
Cairo, they reached Suez by June 3rd, 1823, and Tor (El Tur) on the Strait of Juba in early July. An accident to his leg detained EHRENBURG until the end of January, 1824, but HEMPRICH returned to Alexandria. In late November he went to Rosetta and was rejoined by EHRENBURG in Alexandria about the end of March, 1824.

Syria: The next journey was to be to Syria, as the entire Eastern shore of the Mediterranean was then called, but actually to Lebanon of the present day. They arrived in Bairut, (Bayrut, Beirut) on the 12th of May, 1824. They made journeys to Mt. Sanin (8622 ft.), Baalbek and Tripoli.

Arabia and Eritrea: Returning in September to Egypt the travelers prepared for their final journey which was to be down the Red Sea to Massawa in Eritrea. During the first week in December they traveled again by camels to Suez. On the 8th of December, 1824, they departed from Suez for a leisurely journey down the Gulf of Suez, passing their former collecting area around Tor, to Ras Muhammed (the extreme tip of the Sinai Peninsula), and along the eastern (Arabian) shore of the Red Sea, skirting Hejaz, to Jambo (Yanbu) and reaching Mastura on Christmas day, then Djedda (Jidda or Juddah) two days later. This, the port of entry for pilgrims to Mecca, is the beginning of what is known as „Arabia felix“, fertile Arabia, which continues on to Aden. The travelers remained here twenty nine days, then on January 25th set forth again, spending that night and the next day at El Ghidan. They anchored overnight on the 27th at El Sode, the 28th on a coral reef, Machram, and on January 31st reached Light (Al Lith). On February 6th they reached the port of Gumfude (Al Qunfudhah) where they remained for a month, making excursions into the fertile Asyr Mountains. Next followed Ketumbal, an Island, March 5th, and the large island group Farsan, March 6th. Here they remained until March 11th, on the afternoon of which day they reached Gisan (Qizān) where they stayed for fourteen days, occupied with collecting excursions. On March 26th they again set sail, reaching the port of Lohaie (Al Luhayya) the following morning, March 27th, and there they remained ten days, making inland excursions to Mor and Sokhra. On April 6th they left Lohaie, April 7th were at Ormuh Island, April 8th at Badie el Cameran and reached Cameran (Kamarān) on the mainland, well down the coast of Yemen, on April the 9th. Here at almost 15° north of the equator, much farther south than they had reached on the Nile, was the lowest latitude that HEMPRICH and EHRENBURG attained in the full five years of their journey. From Cameran they turned to the northwest and reaching the Eritrean Island of Dhalak remained there until the 24th, when they continued on to Massau (Massawa) in Eritrea.

From the outset the voyagers had been exposed to and often suffered from malaria and other tropical fevers. Dr. HEMPRICH, returning from an extended trip to Arkiko and the neighboring Wadi Fogodele, lay ill for forty days and died on June 20th. This ended the expedition, and Dr. EHRENBURG, returning, reached Triest by early December, 1825.

Dr. EHRENBURG, on reaching Vienna, was angry when he learned that the Berlin Museum had sold "duplicates" from their material to the Vienna and other museums.



### Reference

STRESEMANN, Erwin, (1954): HEMPRICH und EHRENBERG. Reisen zweier naturforschender Freunde in Orient geschildert in ihren Briefen aus den Jahren 1819 bis 1826. — Abhandlungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Klasse für Mathematik und allgemeine Naturwissenschaften, n. l., c.-t., 178 p.

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