

PYRAMIDS *

"Ancient Egyptian pyramids and pyramid-like monuments have held fascination for countless numbers of travellers who have flocked to see them from earliest times. One might assume that their fame should position pyramid research among the major branches of Egyptology. Unfortunately, this is not the case; pyramid research has never been selected for a special section or workshop in any of the IAE or other important congress meetings. Notwithstanding this oversight, pyramid research has been conducted since antiquity. The remarkable work of Perring, Lepsius and Petrie in the last century has been followed by many investigations, and excellent studies are currently underway. Yet we have not acquired a satisfactory volume of information and data on pyramids nor thoroughly explored the fields and subjects of pyramid research, and consequently, our knowledge about pyramids remains relatively inadequate. Meanwhile, pyramids are in a state of deterioration. The reasons for my judgement are the following: considerable numbers of monuments have not been sufficiently investigated, published and protected; our knowledge of some pyramid subjects is based on speculation; and many questions cannot be answered with certainty. In order to begin to ameliorate this situation, I have begun systematically organizing accumulated information and data under tentative categories. My objective is to take the first steps towards creating lists and catalogues of pyramid and pyramid-like monuments, and towards exhorting that restoring missing pyramid material should be an objective of pyramid research.

The main substance of pyramid knowledge is information obtained from historical documents and data obtained from pyramid sites. Fields of study include: pyramid concepts, pyramid construction, pyramid history, pyramid developments and others which emerge from the information and data and eventually yield interpretations and theories on pyramids and pyramid-like monuments. These fields are further broken down into subjects within each field. For example, subjects of pyramid concepts include studies on: origins, functions and composition of each monument. Subjects of pyramid construction include studies on: planning, logistics, building and administration of the ancient builders. Subjects of pyramid history are accounts on the periods of: construction, cult maintenance, neglect and discovery of the monument. Subjects of pyramid developments include studies on: political, religious, economical and technological reasons. Most of these subjects are applicable to all monuments, large groups of monuments or monuments in relation to each other; a few of these subjects apply only to individual monuments.

Pyramid knowledge is the ultimate goal of pyramid research. Presently, we cannot claim to have a sufficient degree of knowledge about the fields of study and their subjects mentioned above. Consequently, the first step is to devise lists of the monuments, along with accompanying information and data, and to indicate the pyramid material we need to acquire. I have developed such preliminary lists which appear in this article. The need for the extension of these lists into pyramid catalogues and objectives of pyramid research is clear.

In order to promote knowledge about pyramids, more materials must be processed and fields and subjects developed. An important aside, however, concerns some problems that limit our ability to do so. First are issues that are beyond the control of most scholars. They include: restricted access to some pyramid sites; unpublished, deteriorating and lost pyramid materials; inadequate funding of pyramid investigations; and a shortage of pyramid scholars. Second, as one would expect, some difficulties are encountered in any attempt to formulate the lists, catalogues and objectives. For example, pyramid lists are subject to debatable chronology and the misplacement of unidentified monuments. The pyramid catalogues will not only suffer from inaccurate data, tainted material and speculative subjects but also from the missing material resulting from incomplete and unpublished excavations. The objectives will not only suffer from the problems mentioned above but also from many other factors, for example disharmony among scholars and scientists. Nevertheless, the need for compiling lists and catalogues far outweighs the problems that are encountered in constructing them....."

* Special extract from "Pyramid Research...." by Nabil Swelim In *Hommages à Jean Leclant*.

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