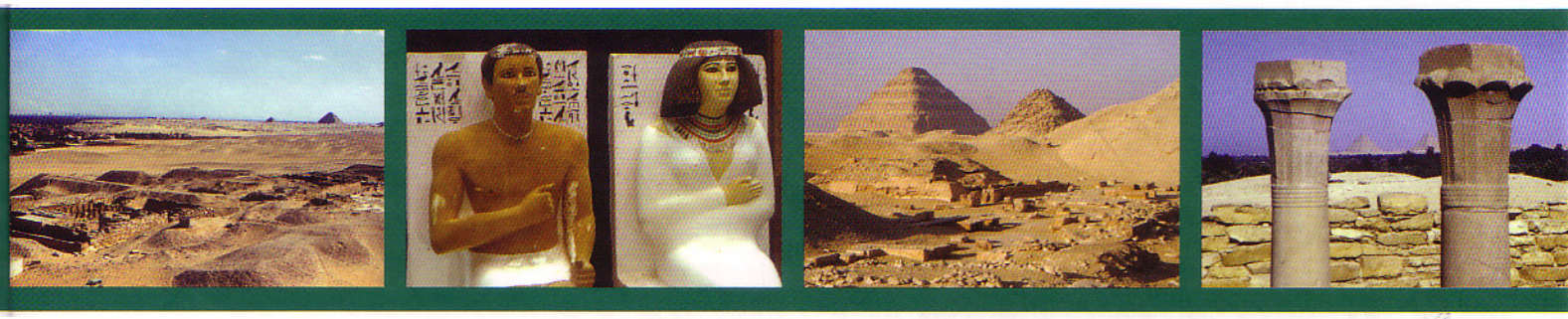
THE OLD KINGDOM ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Proceedings of the Conference



Prague, May 31 – June 4, 2004

Miroslav Bárta
editor

THE OLD KINGDOM ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE HELD IN PRAGUE, MAY 31 – JUNE 4, 2004

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Foreword

It is with pleasure that after more than two years the publication of the lectures held during the conference on the Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology in Prague in the year 2004 (May 3 – June 4) has been made possible.

The conference held in Prague continued the tradition of previous meetings by being dedicated to the same subject: art and its dating in the Old Kingdom of Egypt: the period that forms the first apogee of the developing Egyptian state. The tradition of these irregular meetings was established in 1991 by Hourig Sourouzian and Rainer Stadelmann, at that time the Director of the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo, who organised the first conference.[1] The second meeting also took place in Cairo, at this time the place of the venue was the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology and the conference, held on November 10–13, 1994, was organised by its director Nicolas Grimal.[2] The penultimate meeting took place in Paris, France, on April 3–4, 1998, and was organised by Christiane Ziegler, Chief Conservator of Egyptian Antiquities in the Louvre.[3]

The present volume continues a well-established and successful tradition of post-conference publications. As such, it makes available most of the contributions that were presented during the conference in Prague. It was mainly the scientific profile of the Czech Institute of Egyptology that led us to substantially widen the scope of the conference in 2004. The total of thirty-three contributions presented in this volume cover various aspects connected to Old Kingdom culture, not only its art, but also its archaeology and architecture, selected administrative problems, iconography, texts and the latest, often first time published results of ongoing excavations. From the list of contributions it becomes evident that natural sciences and their application in the widest sense receive general acceptance and support from among Egyptologists. It is one of the few aspects that can in the future significantly enhance our understanding of specific issues connected to the Old Kingdom art and archaeology.

Eng. Marta Štrachová carefully edited the manuscript and was essential in producing this volume. The advice and guidance of Eng. Jolana Malátková also proved indispensable. The Czech Academy of Sciences is to be thanked for the production of the book. Last but not least, it was Prof. Dr. Jean Leclant, Secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Paris, and the chair of the European branch of the Fondation Michela Schiff Giorgini, and Prof. Dr. David Silverman, University of Pennsylvania, chair of the North American branch of the the Fondation Michela Schiff Giorgini and the respective committees that approved this publication and agreed to support it financially.

Miroslav Bárta

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[1] The conference was held in the German Archaeological Institute, Cairo, on October 29–30, and the proceedings published in 1995 in the volume *Kunst des Alten Reiches. Symposium des Deutschen Archäologischen Institut Kairo am 29. und 30. Oktober 1991*, *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo*, *Sonderschrift* 28, Mainz am Rhein.

[2] N. Grimal, ed., *Lex critères de datation stylistiques à l´Ancien Empire, Bibliothèque d´Étude* 120 (Cairo, 1998).

[3] Ch. Ziegler, N. Palayret, eds., *L'Art de l'Ancien Empire égyptien. Actes du colloque organisé au Musée du Louvre par le Service culturel les 3 et 4 avril 1998* (Paris, 1999).

Bibliography

Abbreviations for journals, series and monographs used throughout the volume follow the system of *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (cf. *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, *Band* VII. *Nachträge, Korrekturen und Indices*, founded by W. Helck and E. Otto, edited by W. Helck and W. Westendorf, Wiesbaden 1992, XIV–XXXVIII).

The following additional abbreviations are also used:

ACER – The Australian Centre for Egyptology: Reports, Sydney;
AOS – American Oriental Society, Michigan;
BSAK – Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur, Beihefte, Hamburg;
CA – Current Anthropology, Chicago, Illinois;
Hannig, *Handwörterbuch* – R. Hannig, *Die Sprache der Pharaonen. Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch (2800–950 v. Chr.)*, Mainz 1995;
Harpur, *DETOK* – Y. Harpur, *Decoration in Egyptian Tombs of the Old Kingdom. Studies in Orientation and Scene Content*, London and New York 1988;
Harvey, *WSOK* – J. Harvey, *Wooden Statues of the Old Kingdom. A Typological Study, Egyptological Memoirs 2*, Leiden 2001;
KAW – Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt, Mainz am Rhein;
LingAeg – Lingea Aegyptia, Journal of Egyptian language Studies, Göttingen;
OrMonsp – Orientalia Monspeliensia, Montpellier;
PAM – Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean, Warsaw;
SAGA – Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägyptens, Heidelberg;
WES – Warsaw Egyptological Studies, Warsaw.

Stones, ancestors, and pyramids: investigating the pre-pyramid landscape of Memphis[1]

Serena Love

Introduction

Egyptological research appears to be entering a new paradigm, focusing on how the pyramids built Egypt[2] rather than how the Egyptians built the pyramids.[3] This paper aims to further the notion that pyramid construction contributed to the creation of social identity and ideology by examining the pre-pyramid landscape of early Memphis, from a purely symbolic approach. Building from over 50 years of research concerning the pragmatics of pyramid construction,[4] this paper will focus on the lesser-known symbolic associations of the Memphite landscape, such as the cultural appropriation of local topography. The accumulation of this material suggests that the deliberate placement of monuments was an act to acknowledge the ancestors and legitimize power.

The intention of this paper is to illustrate the degree of cultural activity that preceded pyramid construction. The purpose here is to examine two ideas: 1) the landscape was sacred before it was used for pyramid building and, 2) the patterns of Predynastic and Early Dynastic land use and how it may have influenced later pyramid placement. Over 1,000 years of life and death are represented in Memphis before the first pyramid was built, as there is substantial archaeological material to suggest long-term occupation and sedentary communities.[5] It is suggested here that these early communities of Egyptians had created specific symbolic associations with the landscape, where meaning and cultural significance was gained from repeated use. Memphis was thus 'marked' hundreds of years before a pyramid was ever built.

Landscape theory

It is relevant at this point to briefly explain the origin of some of these ideas and the conceptual framework that supports the argument. Many concepts have been borrowed from British prehistory where scholars have been engaged in the discourse of sacred landscapes, monumentality, use of place and space and phenomenology.[6]

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[1] This paper is a result of research conducted at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, under the direction of David Jeffreys, Sue Hamilton and Stephen Quirke. Thanks also to Colin Reader and Michael Shanks at Stanford University who read earlier drafts of this paper and to Steve Townend who nourished many of these ideas and theories from their conception.

[2] For example, M. Lehner, *The Complete Pyramids* (London, 1997).

[3] For example, Di. Arnold, *Building in Egypt: Pharaonic Stone Masonry* (Oxford, 1991); S. Clark, R. Engelbach, *Ancient Egyptian Construction and Architecture* (Dover, 1990).

[4] I. E. S. Edwards, *The Pyramids of Egypt* (Harmondsworth, 1947); A. Fakhry, *The Pyramids* (Chicago, 1961); M. Verner, *The Pyramids* (New York, 2001).

[5] F. Debono, B. Mortensen, *El-Omari: A Neolithic Settlement and Other Sites in the Vicinity of the Wadi Hof*, *AV* 82 (1990); M. Hoffman, *Egypt Before the Pharaohs* (London, 1980); B. Midant-Reynes, *The Prehistory of Egypt* (Oxford, 2000).

[6] B. Bender, ed., *Landscape, Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford, 1995); R. Bradley, *Altering the Earth: The Origins of Monuments in Britain and Continental Europe* (Edinburgh, 1993); *idem* , 'Ruined Buildings, Ruined Stones: Enclosures, Tombs and Natural Places in the Neolithic of South-West England', *WA* 30/1 (1998): 13–22; *idem*, *The Significance of Monuments: On the Shaping of Human Experience in Neolithic and Bronze Age Europe* (London, 1998b); *idem*, *The Archaeology of Natural Places* (London, 2000); *idem*, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies* (London, 2002); M. Edmonds, *Ancestral Geographies of the Neolithic: Landscapes, Monuments and Memory* (London, 1999); C. Richards, 'Monuments as Landscape: Creating the Centre of the World in Late Neolithic Orkney', *WA* 28/2 (1996): 190–208; J. Thomas, *Rethinking the Neolithic* (Cambridge, 1991); *idem*, 'Archaeologies of Place and Landscape', in I. Hodder, ed., *Archaeological Theory Today* (Oxford, 2001), 165–186; C. Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments* (Oxford, 1994); *idem*, *Metaphor and Material Culture* (London, 1999).

The premise is that landscape is not just a backdrop to cultural actives but rather it is an active participant, an embodied landscape.[7] Construction activities should not be viewed as just practical but as situated within a landscape of social memories, where they are fundamental to social memory.[8] Consider that 'monuments' are both 'natural' and 'cultural', as the nature-culture divide is a construct of modern Cartesian philosophy and was not a view held in the past.[9] Landscape archaeology has emerged as a relatively new sub-discipline in archaeological circles and is now important to explore these theories within an Egyptian context. Some exciting new works of this kind have emerged in Egyptology[10] and it is hoped that the landscape topic will be further expanded in the following years.

We may understand people's engagement with the natural landscape to gauge the possible motivations behind site selection, by examining how landscape may have looked before it was culturally altered with monumental architecture. Perhaps the shape and location of natural features contributed to later monumentality, such as temple buildings and the placement of cemeteries. Three examples of how myth, place names, and archaeology can demonstrate the cultural appropriation of natural places. First is the cultural appropriation of a rock exposure at Giza and its possible links with ancestral memory. The white limestone cliffs of the eastern mountains were known as the 'White Walls' may have acted as a landscape metaphor. The third is the deliberate placement of the Ptah temple on an island in the Nile valley and its association with the creation myths.

Natural places

In a book entitled *The Past in Prehistoric Societies*, Bradley[11] discusses the possibilities of an ancestral awareness in the lives of prehistoric people. People have always had a past and a history.[12] In the absence of documentation, societies remember and identify themselves through maintaining 'close links with places where past events had happened and with forms of architecture and material culture which had been inherited from antiquity'.[13] Bradley has suggested an interpretation whereby prehistoric people may interpret 'natural features' as structural ruins or relics of their ancestral past. There may be an 'inability to distinguish between the remains of a building from natural rock formations'.[14] Neolithic people interpreted the landscape according to their own sets of understandings, where rock formations may resemble ruined buildings and/or animal shapes. These ruins may have represented a link with the ancestral past and certain prominent landscape features might have even have acquired special meaning.

If we apply this discussion to the cultural appropriation of natural landforms, then the perception of landforms as ruined monuments may have been acknowledged as meaningfully constituted material culture by Neolithic people. 'People did not make artefacts or build structures according to a traditional format because they were unable to think of anything else. Rather, they did so as one way of adhering to tradition and maintaining links with what they knew of their past'.[15] Thus mimicking landforms in monumental architecture was a means of constructing social identity through its connection with the past.

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[7] Bender, ed., *Landscape, Politics and Perspectives*.
[8] Edmonds, *Ancestral Geographies of the Neolithic*, 48, 134.
[9] Thomas, in Hodder, ed., *Archaeological Theory Today*, 491.
[10] D. Montserrat, L. Meskell, 'Mortuary Archaeology and Religious Landscape at Graeco-Roman Deir el-Medina', *JEA* 83 (1997): 179–197; J. Richards, (1999). 'Conceptual Landscapes in the Egyptian Nile Valley', in W. Ashmore, A. B. Knapp, eds., *Archaeologies of Landscape* (London, 1999), 83–100.
[11] Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies.*
[12] *Idem*, *WA* 30/1 (1998): 13–22; *idem*, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies.*
[13] *Ibid.*, 8.
[14] Bradley, *WA* 30/1 (1998): 20.
[15] *Idem*, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies,* 11.

A prominent feature on the pre-pyramid landscape at Giza is the east facing 'sphinx promontory', located on the eastern edge of the Giza plateau. By examining the geology of the sphinx head in relation to the original ground level, it appears that the head of the sphinx would have been a natural feature before the body was carved in later antiquity. The Sphinx's face has been carved from the old cliff edge and was naturally cut by a wadi to the north and followed the plateau's southern slope.[16] Although the southern knoll is a larger rock outcrop and a more prominent feature, there may have been something else about the Sphinx promontory that gave it character. It is very probable that this large promontory would have looked rather human-like in its original, unaltered state.

Perhaps Predynastic people culturally appropriated the sphinx rock, as a relic left by their ancestors. The human-like appearance of the landform may have been perceived as a ruined sculpture shaped in the past and left by their ancestors. Perhaps the early Egyptians imitated these landforms to honour their past and reinforce a sense of identity, by legitimising their past. The rock may have even influenced people's later choice in settling and burying their dead. Giza may have acquired sacred significance in the Predynastic, as being a place used and altered by their ancestors. The sphinx rock may have been interpreted as a 'monumental relic' left and re-interpreted by people in the Predynastic Period.

The White Walls of Memphis: A Landscape Metaphor

The earliest name of Memphis was the 'White Walls', known from textual sources. It has been frequently interpreted to mean that there was a white man-made wall[17], which was plastered and painted white or built from white material, such as limestone.[18] The meaning and location of the White Walls has been the subject of much debate,[19] yet remains unresolved. This discussion is restricted to Old Kingdom sources and considers later textual references inapplicable. This section discusses three textual references to an early 'wall' and argues that the 'wall' may actually have been a landscape metaphor for the white limestone cliffs.

One of the first 'White Wall' references is from a seal in the Abydos tomb of Khasheshemwy,[20] that names 'Memphis' as *Ỉnbw-ḥḏ*, or 'White Walls'. Evidence from Egyptian urban archaeology suggests that even the earliest cities and towns were walled.[21] This notion is further supported by the hieroglyph for 'village, town or city',  *njwt*, which is interpreted as an ideogram for a walled city with two cross-roads.[22] The second reference to Memphis having a wall comes from the epithet of the Memphite patron deity, Ptah, whose name *Pṯḥ* translates to 'he who is' 'south of his wall'.[23] This epithet is recorded on the Palermo Stone in the eleventh year of Neferirkara's reign and is found in a Fifth Dynasty tomb of Persen at Saqqara.[24] The last mention of a wall is found on second register of the Palermo Stone, describing a 'circuit of the walls' attributed to the Second Dynasty king Djer. This text has been

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[16] Pers. comm. Colin Reader.

[17] J. Málek, 'The Temples at Memphis. Problems Highlighted by the EES Survey', in S. Quirke, ed., *The Temple in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1997).

[18] I. E. S. Edwards, 'The Early Dynastic Period in Egypt', in I. E. S. Edwards, C. J. Gadd and N. G. L. Hammond, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge University Press, 1971), 1–17.

[19] Gardiner, *EG*; Gauthier, *DG*; S. Love, 'What is in a Name? Questioning the Name and Location of Memphis, Egypt', in *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology* 14 (2003): 70–84; Montet, *Géographie*; K. Sethe, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Aegyptens* (Leipzig, 1905).

[20] Petrie, *RT*, pl. XXIII, 193.

[21] M. Bietak, 'Urban Archaeology and the "Town Problem" in Ancient Egypt', in K. Weeks, ed., *Egyptology and the Social Sciences* (Cairo, 1979), 97–144; B. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (London, 1989).

[22] Gardiner, *EG*, 498, Sign O 49.

[23] *Wb* I, 95; Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, 124.

[24] T. A. H. Wilkinson, *Royal Annals of Ancient Egypt: The Palermo Stone and its associated fragments* (London, 2000), 179–180.

interpreted as a ceremony presumably held in Memphis, where the king would walk or run around the walls of his capital, or palace, as a part of his coronation ceremony.[25]

The kings of the Second Dynasty occupied Memphis, as we know from traces of their funerary structures. The 'circuit of the walls' could be in reference to *any* wall so long as it possessed the appropriate royal symbolism. The 'circuit of the wall' ceremony may have been 'more related to the symbol and definition of the sacred space'[26] than to an actual ritual activity. Considering the nature of these early texts, it is difficult to conclude if such a ritual actually ever happened at all. The term 'wall' is extremely vague and considering there is no structural evidence for the Early Dynastic or Old Kingdom city of Memphis, or any *in situ* remains of early temple buildings. There is no archaeological evidence to substantiate the received notion that a white wall surrounded the city of Memphis.

In considering these three textual sources, there is a curious absence of the hieroglyphic word *Ỉnb-ḥḏ* in other contemporary Old Kingdom documents, such as the Pyramid Texts or the Royal Annals. Several other places are named within the region but none specifically mention a place called *Ỉnb-ḥḏ*. The absence could be explained as there is no need to name the region in which one occupies, or from where the documents were written. However, what this does imply is that there was no one single area with the designation *Ỉnb-ḥḏ*, lending credibility to the concept that the name may have been a regional designation rather than a specific town or city.

Landscape Metaphor

If we consider that assigning a name to a place is to assign the place meaning and identity,[27] coupled with the absence of archaeological evidence for a wall, then the name 'White Walls' may be referring to something else. As the name suggests, the White Wall is in some way a defining feature for the area. The limestone cliffs that flank the Nile valley extend the entire distance of Memphis, dropping off at the northern and southern boundaries, giving the impression of being surrounded by a great 'wall'. Thus, the 'White Wall' name could be a reference to the white limestone cliffs and not to a man-made structure, making these cliffs a landscape metaphor for the 'wall'. An Islamic traveller, Ibn Sa'id, first mentioned this idea in the Thirteenth Century, when he described Fustat as a 'white city with al-Muqattam overlooking it like a wall'.[28] Jeffreys asks, 'could the same geological simile have been used for the older 'white wall', as viewed against the backdrop of the western or eastern cliffs?'[29] The white limestone cliffs may have been a landscape metaphor for the 'wall' that gave Memphis its name.

However, this interpretation cannot account for the epithet of Ptah, 'he who is south of his wall'. Under the above definition, the Ptah temple at Mit Rahina would still be located within the boundaries of 'the wall', not south of it. But if a section of the western and eastern cliffs are considered, and not the entire mountain range, then the Ptah temple would indeed be south of this section. A natural valley, the Wadi Digla, divides the cliff in two halves, separating the Moqqatam Hills from the Tura Hills. The limestone 'wall' behind the early settlement between Helwan and Ma'adi would have been very prominent and highly visible to the people who lived there. Perhaps the first regional occupants near the Tura Hills appropriated the cliffs as a 'white wall'. This section of cliffs is also the most evident and visible

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[25] Wilkinson, *Royal Annals,* 92–94; *idem*, *Early Dynastic Egypt* (London, 1999), 210.
[26] A. Serrano, *Royal Festivals in the Late Predynastic Period and the First Dynasty* (Oxford, 2002), 41.
[27] Tilley, *Metaphor and Material Culture,* 177.
[28] D. Jeffreys, *Written and Graphic Sources for an Archaeological Survey of Memphis, Egypt: from 500 BCE to 1900 CE, with special reference to the papers of Joseph Hekekyan*, Ph.D. thesis (London, 1999), 15.
[29] *Ibid.*

from the west bank, from Saqqara to Abu Ghurab. This area also corresponds with the areas of most concentrated Predynastic and Early Dynastic funerary land use (although there is material further north, but none to the south).

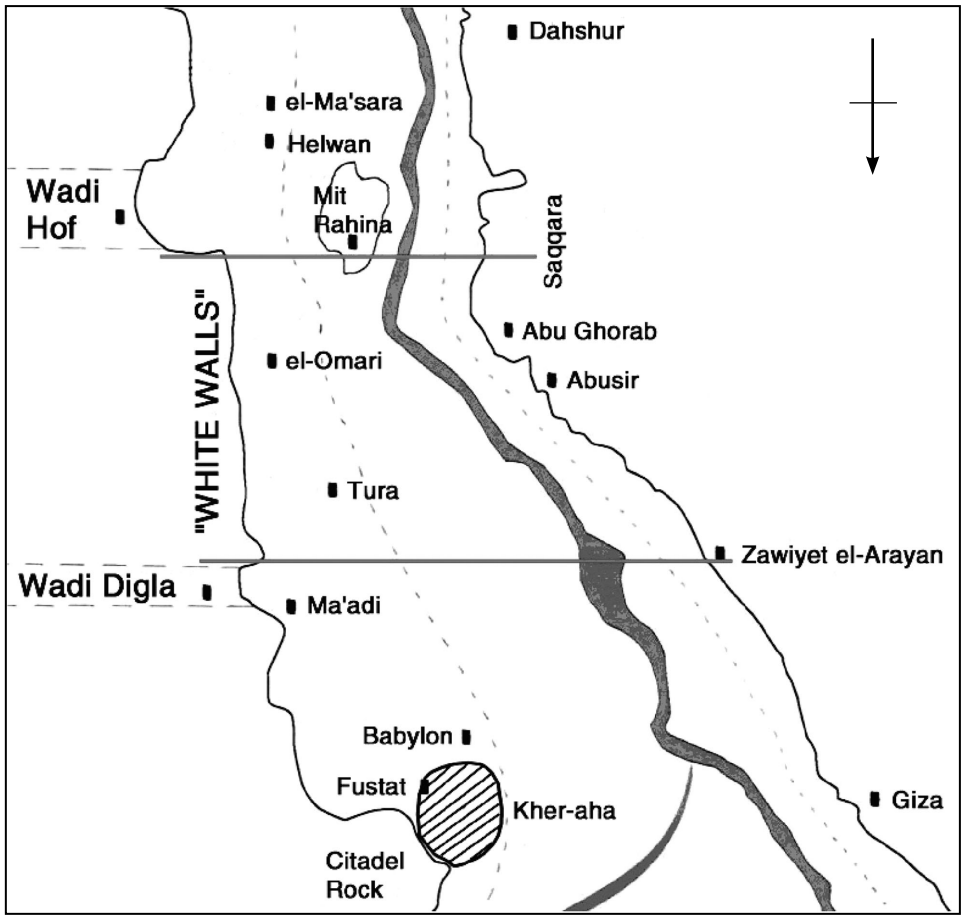

Fig. 1 Map of Memphis

Mound of Creation

The Nile valley is physically characterised by areas of high and low ground. Typically, areas of high ground were ideal for animal grazing and settlements as they were beyond the reaches of the annual floodwaters. Thus, natural mounds and islands were perceived as highly desirable places of land and were culturally appropriated. In a land that was submerged under a blanket of water for three months of the year, it is not surprising that the Egyptian creation myths describe all life beginning on an island, where the primeval mound of creation emerged out of the waters of chaos.[30] 'The appearance of the primeval hill from the primeval waters denoted the emergence of the world. The city of Memphis was created its own personification of the primeval hill'.[31] It was on this island, the centre of the universe and the cosmic world, that chaos was defeated and all life begun.[32]

Ptah, the Creator

Central to the creation myth is the god Ptah, the patron god of Memphis. The earliest images of Ptah come from a stone bowl of the First and Second Dynasty site of Tarkhan[33] and the earliest epithet is from the Fifth Dynasty.[34] Herodotus claims

[30] J. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Account* (Yale, 1988); R. Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1959), 35 ff.
[31] M. Lurker, *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1974), 96.
[32] Clark, *Myth and Symbol*, 67.
[33] *Tarkhan* I *and Memphis* V.
[34] Wilkinson, *Royal Annals of Ancient Egypt*, 180.

that the legendary king Menes created Memphis whose successor supposedly built a Ptah temple.[35] Old Kingdom textual sources are incomplete and very fragmentary. Ptah is scarcely mentioned in the Pyramid Texts but there are two priests of Ptah in the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties[36] and two possible mentions of Ptah on the Palermo Stone from the First and Fifth Dynasties.[37]

The earliest cult use of this island was in relation to Ptah,[38] however no *in situ* archaeology has been recovered. The Survey of Memphis team found re-used Old Kingdom temple blocks believed to have been from an earlier building but nothing of its original structure or foundation has survived.[39] A Ptah temple existed during the Middle and New Kingdoms and was continually in use through the Ptolemaic period, circa 100 BC. Thus, from the very beginning, the modern mound of Mit Rahina was dedicated to Ptah, marking the land as the centre of the universe, the cosmic beginning.

A Sacred Mound

Places are attributed to specific gods because of the way an area looks or the attributes it may have.[40] Life was mythically created on an island and it is not a coincidence that the topography of Memphis is a perfect match with the creation accounts. There are several islands in the course of the Nile so then what was special about Mit Rahina? Bradley suggests that mythologies are created to explain natural features, as if it has always been that way.

Temples themselves are heavily loaded with symbolic meaning[41] and some later texts mention how temples also emerged from the waters of chaos.[42] Sacred lakes were common architectural features in later periods but perhaps the symbolic relationship between water and temples had begun earlier. What better way to represent and preserve the sacred ideology than by building a temple on a large, natural island that will be surrounded by water during the inundation? Cross cultural references suggest that natural features were deliberately selected for their shape or location to harness the power embedded within.[43] Mit Rahina was an ideal location to maintain and promote the myth of chaos and to physically illustrate the king's divine power and control. Building a Ptah temple at Mit Rahina embodied all of these beliefs by combining the powers of a sacred location, myth and divine kingship.

These three examples illustrate how the natural topography of Memphis was culturally appropriated. The Sphinx rock at Giza was seen as a relic of the past, creating an ancestral memory. The act of naming gave a place an identity and biography to specific landforms. At Helwan and el-Omari, the white limestone cliffs provided a tremendous backdrop and an ever-present feature in the landscape. Perhaps these cliffs gave people the impetus to think about it in a special way, so to name them the 'White Walls'. Myths were a means to 'explain' their ancestral past. The size, shape and location of Mit Rahina gave Memphis a cosmic beginning, as Memphis had created its place in the cosmos, where the Ptah temple was at its centre.

These sites are not here by chance or random placement. Each natural landform had symbolic meaning before it was culturally altered with monumental

[35] A. B. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book* II *Commentary 1–98;* Málek, in Quirke, ed., *The Temple in Ancient Egypt*, 90.
[36] Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 293.
[37] *Ibid.*, *Royal Annals of Ancient Egypt*, 105.
[38] Malek, in Quirke, ed., *The Temple in Ancient Egypt*, 90; Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 293.
[39] Jeffreys, *Survey of Memphis* I.
[40] Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies.*
[41] D. O'Connor, 'Mirror of the Cosmos: The Palace of Merenptah', in E. Blieberg, R. Freed, eds., *Fragments from a Shattered Visage: Proceedings of the International Symposium of Ramesses the Great* (Memphis, 1991), 167–191.
[42] E. A. E. Reymond, *The Mythical Origin of the Egyptian Temple* (Manchester, 1969).
[43] Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies.*

architecture. None of these locations are silent, as each was imparted with symbolic associations and were culturally appropriated, in their natural, unaltered state. Myths, names and biographies all contributed to creating a collective social identity and may have also played a part in determining later pyramid site location.

Pyramid choices

Egyptology has a detailed discussion about the possible motivations for pyramid locations. These include geological suitability, site access, availability of good quality limestone and the proximity to a royal palace.[44] Reasons for the constantly changing locations have been attributed to breaks in kinship, incomplete structures, visibility with Iunu sun temple and/ or a change in the royal palace.[45] Any of these possibilities are equally valid as answers to the plaguing question of pyramid site location. However, perhaps there is an alternative interpretation for site location concerning previous site use attributed to the ancestors. If kings were consciously choosing their pyramids sites,[46] then why not honour their past to strengthen and legitimize their present constructions?

A counter functional approach is not concerned with the function and purpose of pyramids but of their meaning. The location of Memphis was not only in a 'conspicuously strategic'[47] location but it also was 'conspicuously symbolic', heavily imbued with cultural ideals and cosmological significance. Religious monuments like pyramids were symbolic expressions of the sacred landscape, embodied with social significance. Pyramids are not simply a gross display of wealth.[48] Instead, they demonstrate a developing ideology, heavily loaded with symbolic meaning. Their location on the west bank is deliberate, as well as each individual site. The location and shape of each pyramid reflect deliberate and conscious choices. It is also possible that the act of pyramid building was more important than the completed structure.

Marking the space for the dead

The landscape was permanently marked by burials from the first communities to engage in mortuary practices. The selection process of burials is never random or arbitrary; it is deliberate and quite often carries heavy symbolic significance.[49] Using a place to house the dead permanently augmented the perception of the landscape, from the very first burial. 'Each stone erected… would have marked individual biographies and an altered understanding of the landscape'.[50] Pyramids were a later expression of earlier burial traditions but were more visually imposing than previous funerary architecture.

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[44] Edwards, *The Pyramids of Egypt*; Kemp, 'Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period c. 2886–1552 BC', in B. Kemp, A. Lloyd, D. O'Connor, B. Trigger, eds., *Ancient Egypt: A Social History* (Cambridge, 1983), 71–112; B. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (New York, 1989); J. Málek, 'Orion and the Giza Pyramids', *DE* 30 (1994): 101–114; M. Verner, *Forgotten Pharaohs, Lost Pyramids: Abusir* (Prague, 1994).

[45] H. Goedicke, 'Abusir-Saqqara-Giza', in M. Bárta, J. Krejčí, eds., *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2000* (Prague, 2000), 397–412; D. Jeffreys, 'The Topography of Heliopolis and Memphis: Some Cognitive Aspects', in H. Guksch, D. Polz, eds., *Stationen: Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Ägypten* (Mainz, 1998), 63– 72; J. Malek, 'The Old Kingdom (c. 2686–2125 BC)', in I. Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2000), 89–117; Verner, *The Pyramids.*

[46] H. Goedicke, 'Giza: Causes and Concepts', *BACE* 6 (1995): 31–50; K. Spence, 'Ancient Egyptian Chronology and the Astronomical Orientation of Pyramids', *Nature* 408 (2000): 320–324.

[47] M. Campagno, 'Another Reason for the Foundation of Memphis', in Z. Hawass, L. P. Brock, eds., *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century: Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists, Cairo 2000* (Cairo, 2003), 155.

[48] B. Trigger, 'Monumental Architecture: A Thermodynamic Explanation of Symbolic Behaviour', *WA* 22/2 (1990): 119–132.

[49] M. Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (Stroud, 1999).

[50] Richards, *WA* 28/2 (1996): 193.

Pre-pyramid landscape

Before the pyramids were built, Memphis had a long tradition of social, religious and funerary land use.[51] The objective here is to demonstrate how the land was used, interpreted and culturally appropriated leading to the eventual construction of pyramids over 1,000 years after the first regional burials. Table 1 is a visual representation of the temporal and spatial distribution of the archaeology in Memphis. The data in the chart is based on the presence and absence of archaeological material and many of the sites have been clustered together. The cultural material is at first concentrated on the east bank sites of Helwan, el-Omari, Tura and Ma'adi but it equally present on the west bank sites of Abu Roash, Giza, Zawiyet el-Aryan, Abusir and Saqqara. These results are the clear: each pyramid site, with the exception of Dahshur, has pre-existing cultural activity.[52]

The west-bank pyramid sites, from Saqqara to Abu Roash, each have traces of early activity and a necropolis dating from the Predynastic and/or Early Dynastic periods. These early cemeteries may have pre-determined pyramid site selection, in having an pre-established funerary tradition. Thus, the early occupation of Memphis is highly pertinent in determining land use. In this way, the landscape of Memphis was a landscape of memory.

By saying that pyramid sites had a pre-existing tradition implies secondary landscape use. At Saqqara, there is evidence to suggest that Second Dynasty buildings were destroyed or partially demolished in the process of constructing the Step Pyramid.[53] Similarly at Giza, it has been proposed that Predynastic and/or Early Dynastic material was cleared away in creating the pyramid platforms.[54] There are two possible royal structures at Abu Roash that precede the Fourth Dynasty royal pyramid.[55] Other pyramid sites, such as Abusir and Zawiyet el-Aryan, each has traces of First and Second Dynasty tombs. Thus, pyramids were secondary activities at these sites. Perhaps these sites had always been sacred but the outward expression of this symbolism had changed through the different types of burial monuments. The re-use of a site with the construction of a secondary monument denotes this place as possessing a hallowed history and biography, since these sites were clearly not 'virgin' ground.

Secondary landscape use can forge a link with an ancestral and mythical past that highlights the concept of 'sacred' within an 'ordered landscape imbued with ideas of auspicious and inauspicious places and directions, heavily influenced by a perceived relationship between the living and the dead, the past and the present'.[56] It illustrates that there was a concept of the past at that time and secondary monuments were built in honour of older traditions.[57] The monuments of Memphis were built in areas that already had significance or were distinctive natural places that were held in local mythology. The chosen location for pyramids was clearly influenced by earlier traditions, since these sites each had a pre-pyramid history. Although each pyramid site may have already been established, it is not to ignore the impact of monumentality and the negotiation of the landscape.

Memphis was a sacred landscape *before* pyramid construction and pyramids were just one aspect of a reflexive tradition of Egyptian funerary architecture. Pyramids

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[51] Debono, Mortensen, *El-Omari;* I. Rizkana, J. Seeher, *Maadi* IV*: The Predynastic Cemeteries of Maadi and Wadi Digla*, *AV* 81 (Mainz, 1990); Z. Y. Saad, *The Excavations at Helwan: Art and Civilization in the First and Second Egyptian Dynasties* (Norman, 1969).

[52] Although a conversation with S. Seidlmaier (6/2004) suggests the possibility of earlier material present but undiscovered at Dahshur.

[53] A. Tavares, 'The Saqqara Survey Project', in C. Eyre, ed., *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists* (Leuven, 1998), 1135–1142; Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*.

[54] B. Mortensen, 'Four Jars from the Ma'adi Culture found in Giza', *MDAIK* 41 (1985): 145–147.

[55] A. Dodson, 'On the Threshold of Glory: The Third Dynasty', *KMT* 9/2 (1998): 26–40; N. Swelim, *The Brick Pyramid at Abu Rowash Number '1' by Lepsius* (Alexandria, 1987).

[56] Richards, *WA* 28/2 (1996): 195.

[57] Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies*, 85.

Table 1 The temporal and spatial distribution of archaeology in Memphis. Table based on simple presence and absence of any cultural material ending with the Sixth Dynasty

	Dates BC									
	Early Predyn.	**Late Predyn.**	**Protodyn.**	**Dyn. 1**	**Dyn. 2**	**Dyn. 3**	**Dyn. 4**	**Dyn. 5**	**Dyn. 6**	
	5500–3500	3500–3200	3200–3050	3050–2890	2890–2686	2686–2613	2613–2502	2502–2360	2360–2185	
West Bank										**East Bank**
Dahshur	0	0	0	0	0	0	X	X	X	
South Saqqara	0	0	0	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	0	0	X	X	X	X	X	0	0	**Helwan**
Saqqara	0	0	0	X	X	X	X	X	X	
North Saqqara	0	0	0	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	X	0	0	X	X	0	0	0	0	**el-Omari**
Abusir	0	X	X	X	X	X	0	X	X	
Abu Ghurab	0	0	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	
	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	0	0	**Tura**
	X	X	X	X	X	0	0	0	0	**Maadi**
	X	X	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**Wadi Digla**
Z. el-Aryian	0	0	0	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Giza	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	0	0	0	X	0	0	0	0	0	**Fustat**
Abu Roash	0	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	X	X	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**Heliopolis**

may have delineated large-scale sacred space through their monumentality. Since pyramids were made of stone, it could be said people wished to create an enduring record of fixed cosmological principles; setting memories in stone. It could also suggest that monumentality was considered the appropriate medium with which to inscribe social memories.

Pyramids for the living

The placement of the dead can imply more about the people who buried them, than the dead themselves.[58] The dead are deliberately placed in highly visible structures to be remembered and to forge collective memories of the past.[59] A tomb can represent more to the society that constructed it, than to the deceased placed within it. In this manner, the dead are buried for the benefit of the living and that can require burials to be in certain locations.[60] From this perspective, what does the Memphis funerary landscape indicate about the people who lived within it? I propose that this landscape was sacred first to gods and subsequently developed into a national necropolis.

Areas in the landscape are sacred to the dead and are clearly distinct from the living. This is amply evident in Memphis from Dynastic times where the dead are exclusively buried in the western and eastern deserts and the living presumably occupied the Nile valley. Some would argue that this phenomenon was dictated by topography, where it would be inconvenient to construct houses for the living in the desert because of the impractical distance to the agricultural zone or water source. Yet, when assessing monumental architecture, 'the principle of least effort does not apply'[61] and should not be regarded as an exclusive deciding factor. Perhaps there is another, more symbolic, motivation driving monumental architecture that undermines functionalistic explanations.

As highly sacred symbols, it was a priority for every king to build his own monument. This may account for the amount of unfinished pyramids, since what was important was *the act of pyramid building* more than the structure's completion. Every king that came to the throne in the Old Kingdom was known to have built a pyramid, or at least started one. It was uncommon for a succeeding king to complete his predecessor's pyramid, leading to the suggestion that perhaps the performance of construction was more critical than the final outcome. It was important for each king to build a pyramid and thus perhaps people were engaged in the construction project as a 'religious experience, the result of which was intended to last forever. By their toil a specific place in the world was given a permanence and sharper physical definition through monumental constructions'.[62] In this way, every member of society was engaged with the project to some extent and the construction of the monument contributed to create the fabric of society.[63]

Conclusions: reflexive use of Memphite space

The culturally constructed landscape marks the land as the centre of the universe, the cosmic beginning. A great number of the creation myths are centred on Memphis, specifically Iunu and the Mit Rahina island. Life was created on an island and it is not likely a coincidence that the Memphis region is a topographic match with mythical creation accounts. Pyramids are a metaphor for rebirth by representing the 'primeval mound', compounding the symbolic qualities of the

[58] M. Parker Pearson, 'The Powerful Dead: Archaeological Relationships Between the Living and the Dead', *CAJ* 3/2 (1993): 203–229.
[59] Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies.*
[60] Parker Pearson, *CAJ* 3/2 (1993): 203.
[61] Trigger, *WA* 22/2 (1990): 124.
[62] Richards, *WA* 28/2 (1996): 193.
[63] Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies*, 82.

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