

Egyptian pyramids research paper

[History](#), [Middle East](#)



Introduction

The Egyptian pyramids are considered one of the greatest mysteries on earth today. The pyramids were the tombs of Egyptian kings and were made of stone; these tombs are a testament to human skill as they are thousands of years old (National Geographic, 2011). It is believed that these pyramids were the product of the ‘ Old Kingdom Society’ which was prominent in the Nile Valley after the year 3000 B. C. (Fish, 1996). Archaeologists estimate that these pyramids were built between 2589 and 2504 B. C., a span of around eighty five years.

History

The ancient Egyptians believed that the pharaoh became a king in the land of the dead when he died and was called an Osiris (AIA, 1999). The newly throned pharaoh became the sun god’s protector and god of the heavens and was called Horus (National Geographic, 2011). They became part of a cycle which was represented by the sun’s rising and setting. They believed that when a pharaoh died part of his spirit called his ‘ ka’ was retained in his body (AIA, 1999). It was therefore necessary that the pharaoh’s corpse receive proper care to ensure the dead pharaoh would be able to carry out his duties as an Osiris. In case the dead king was unable to carry out his duties, the cycle would be broken, bringing unfathomable disaster upon the land of Egypt.

To ensure such a catastrophe did not occur, the dead pharaoh’s body was mummified. In his grave, the dead king was provided with provisions for the afterlife. These included: clay, gold and stone vessels; food; doll

representations of servants called ushabti; and food. The Egyptians did not always build pyramids, before pyramids they built massive tombs which had been carved into bedrock called mastabas (National Geographic, 2011). The mastabas had dirt mounds on top which were the inspiration for later pyramids. A pyramid was modeled on a pointed stone which was considered sacred called a benben. It is said that the benben represented the sun's beams and the dead pharaoh's used this to get to the heavens (National Geographic, 2011).

The builders of the pyramids were not slaves as per popular belief. Evidence suggests that they were actually Egyptians who lived in communities or villages which were overseen by the supervisors appointed by the pharaoh (Badger and Davidson, 2003). The villages were very sufficient, they contained: brewers; butchers; cemeteries; granaries; health facilities and houses. Studies suggest that some builders had been employed permanently by the pharaoh while others were contracted part time from neighboring villages (AIA, 1999). It can also be safely assumed that some builders were women because some female skeletons which were found seemed to have been involved in heavy labor like carrying stones.

The first pyramid was built by Pharaoh Djoser and was called the Step Pyramid of Djoser (Novokshchenov, 1996). It was constructed during his reign between 2630 and 2611 B. C. and was 62 meters tall. The pyramid was six-stepped and was enclosed by a wall (ten meters) and also composed of chapels, temples, and courtyards and had an underground burial chamber. The next pyramid of interest was called the Maidum Pyramid built by

Pharaoh Snefru around 2600 B. C. (Novokshchenov, 1996). This was an eight-stepped pyramid with a burial chamber which was above the ground.

The Pharaoh Snefru also built a second pyramid known as the Bent Pyramid. This was termed as a 'flawed effort' to build a pyramid which was smooth-sided (Badger and Davidson, 2003). It was however not stable and forced the architects to attempt to cut another angle in the middle of the construction. Pharaoh Snefru ordered the building of the third pyramid called the Red Pyramid after his disappointment with the Bent Pyramid. This pyramid successfully incorporated the smooth sides and was popularly referred to as the first true pyramid.

The Great Pyramid built by Pharaoh Khufu was built around 2550 BC and is listed as a wonder of the world (AIA, 1999). It was the largest that was ever built and had three burial chambers. One chamber was underground, another was above ground, and the last was at the centre of the pyramid. Pharaoh Khafre built the Pyramid of Khafre which is the 'Home of the Sphinx' (National Geographic, 2011). This was built around 2520 BC at Giza. This pyramid was shorter than the Great Pyramid but was surrounded by a complex which was much more elaborate. There were a large number of statues including the famed Sphinx which represents the pharaoh as a lion with a human head and wearing the traditional pharaoh headdress. The Pyramid of Menkaure was begun by Pharaoh Menkaure in 2490 BC. This pyramid was much smaller than the Great Pyramid and Pyramid of Khafre. Unlike the other pyramids, which used limestone, it was made from granite

which was harder to work with. Due to pharaoh's sudden death, work on this pyramid was not completed.

Conclusion

The era when great pyramids were built when Pharaoh Menkaure died and six-year old Pharaoh Pepi II took the throne (National Geographic, 2011). His reign was marked by declining tax collections, external and internal conflicts, drought, and famine. His pyramid was much shorter than those of his predecessors and began a series of pyramids whose structure lacked the grandiose and skill of his pharaohs before him.

Reference

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