

History of landscape architecture: cultural context and literature review



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1. Historical Background

(a) Geo/political

Ancient Egypt was a monarchy which the pharaohs were seemed like a mandate from the gods. Pharaohs expressed the gods' will through laws and policies, which everyone should follow (Mark 2016).

(b) Economy

Ancient Egypt's economy was highly related to peasant exchanges, redistribution of states, and a private sector that provided regional and local marketing. People who were close to the government such as officials, workers, priests, and soldiers relied on the distribution of agricultural products, which provided by peasants as taxation. In addition, temples also involved in economy system. The land, offerings and services granted from individuals could support and maintain mortuary culture for the society (Shafer 1997 p. 8-9).

(c) The predominant artistic philosophy of the period

The sense of order and regularity of rhythm and harmony in Egyptian's art were influenced by the regular flood inundation and the prior invention of geometry (Lloyd et al. 1974 p. 5). Their artistic philosophy was functional and created for a more practical use. For example, to express daily life, the power of governments such as vital expeditions or wars. In addition, they tend to include symmetrical and axial elements and their perspective of cosmos in design concepts (Wilkinson 1998 p. 6-7).

(d) How this artistic philosophy was expressed in the design elements of the period

The artistic philosophy was reflected on sculpture, painting and architecture during ancient Egypt. Particularly, New Kingdom can be viewed as a climax of Egypt's artworks (Mark 2017).

Relief sculptures manifested how pharaohs conquered foreign lands, offered goods to gods or the life of pharaohs' families. They are usually carved on the walls of temples or towers. Sphinx statues are often a combination of pharaoh's head and lion's body. They served as a guardian for the temples. Sometimes, they were aligned symmetrically and along the procession way to emphasize the focal point. The paintings represent creations of the life which pharaoh wanted to live in afterlife. For instance, illustrations of gardens represented the place where they will hunt.

Speaking of architecture, when pools were installed in the site, they are symmetrical and in a ' T ' or rectangular shape. Temples were often designed with an axis, that led to the sanctuary of the principal god and represented daily course of the sun. Along the path, the course of the sun was considered to govern the cosmos, evolving order and eliminating disorder; and also, kingship was established to govern the earth (Shafer 1997 p. 5).

2. Introduction

This is a critical review of Lesko B. S. 1969, ' Royal Mortuary Suites of the Egyptian New Kingdom', *American Journal of Archaeology* , vol. 73, no. 4, pp. 453-458.

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The purpose of this article is to re-examine Uvo Hölscher's interpretation about Temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu comparing to temples from 18th to 20th dynasty, including Temple of Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahri.

The key finding is that Hölscher had some misunderstandings of whether funerary temple after 18th dynasty contains offering chamber. In addition, the article reminds the importance of including destroyed evidence in valuable evidences in order to not mislead a judgment.

The article provides us a way to view early facts and terms in more detail and carefully, however limitations should be considered in understanding the study findings.

3. Summary

The article begins with introducing the conclusion which Uvo Hölscher made. He believed that after ancient Egypt's 18th dynasty, offering chamber was replaced by ' contiguous chamber', which was smaller but connecting to the main section. However, the author, Lloyd, disagreed with the statement and discussed the plan of Temple of Ramesses III to support her idea. For example, in two rooms of the site, illustrations of the deceased plowing and reaping the Fields of Offerings could be observed. Therefore, Lloyd assumed that these rooms were functioned as offering goods to Ramesses III.

Secondly, Hölscher claimed that another room with vaulted ceilings, astronomical designs and false doors was the " sanctuary of Osiris."

Alternatively, Lloyd implied that a room with these features couldn't be seen in any of the deity chapels at Medinet Habu. They could be seen in one of the <https://assignbuster.com/history-of-landscape-architecture-cultural-context-and-literature-review/>

rooms within the 18th dynasty structure, Temple of Hatshepsut. The room was called, “ Southern Hall of Offerings”, which reliefs of people offering foods, clothing and incense to the deceased pharaoh were shown on the walls. Hölscher did correctly recognize that this room was a mortuary offering chamber.

In another example, Temple of Seti I in Gurna, Hölscher intended that the ‘ contiguous chamber’ dedicated to the father of Seti I was an exception. In other words, ‘ contiguous chamber’ should serve for the king himself. In contrast, Lloyd had different perspective, since a large portion of the temple was levelled, the ‘ missing’ mortuary suite might be in the site. Lastly, Lloyd strengthened her argument with cultural aspect. Ancient Egypt was famous for treating their ancestors in the afterlife well and making sure they are enjoying the eternal life. As a result, it is inconceivable that mortuary suites such as offering chambers were being eliminated.

4. Critique

Lloyd’s argument indeed is a challenging one because ancient sites and documents are often recorded and remained incompletely. She first managed to express her ideas via a plan of Temple of Ramesses III; the illustration clearly demonstrated the corresponding positions between each room. Examples throughout the three dynasties were provided to compare, which made her statement more persuasive since many latter temples actually referenced on earlier temples. Besides, Lloyd provided evidences regarding cultural aspects. She mentioned about how the Egyptians generally served the deceased, and this indeed made her argument

convincible because cultural concepts and rituals took up a large part in Egyptian's daily life and our understandings of Ancient Egypt.

There are some problems however, Lloyd provided evidences of diverse aspects but some of them are still somehow guesses. In this case, she mentioned about whether there was a mortuary suite for Seti I himself within the site. Lloyd assumed the 'missing' mortuary suite might be in the part which was levelled today. However, this is unsure, so it couldn't become a very effective evidence. Additionally, whether the essential elements of a mortuary temple should be examined more individually or generally can still be discussed.

Temples are actually more complexed than many early scholars had thought. They tended to categorize or like Hölscher, gave a stable conclusion without having ample evidence. For example, temples were traditionally divided into two categories: divine temples and mortuary temples (Wilkinson 2000 p. 25). However, many mortuary temples were not only places of sacrifices, rituals and offerings to deceased pharaohs but also places dedicated to gods. As in the article, we can find out that in Temple of Ramesses III, there were rooms of sanctuary type identified with Osiris, the god of the afterlife. Furthermore, Temple of Hatshepsut had an intimate connection with Amun, king of the gods.

5. Conclusion

In summary, archaeology is a study that could be improved when new evidences were found, or different perspectives were created. Although new arguments and statements still have controversial sides, every discovery <https://assignbuster.com/history-of-landscape-architecture-cultural-context-and-literature-review/>

provides a chance to cover the shortage of information and a step closer to develop a more intact knowledge. Furthermore, apart from researching on plans or structures, understanding cultural meanings and the history is equally useful and vital. Another thought I had in writing this review, is that with sufficient evidence and accurate information, we should all have the courage to challenge the prior statements.

6. References

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