

Cult of the sun in Ancient Egypt and the Abusir evidence

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The aim of the presentation is to outline major periods of the sun cult during the Old Kingdom period with specific focus on the Abusir evidence covering the history of the 5th and 6th dynasties. At the same time, attention will be paid to some New Kingdom evidence which indicates that the Old Kingdom tradition of the cult of sun, Ra in particular, was remembered and used for specific political statements and policies pursued by some pharaohs of the 18th and 19th dynasties.

Daughter of Ra. Hatshepsut and the Solar Paths of Deir el-Bahari.

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The reign of Hatshepsut marks a new stage in the development of the sun cult. Different and various activities in the 'Southern Heliopolis' were, on the one hand, firmly rooted in the tradition of the Old and Middle Kingdoms, on the other hand, introducing new ideas and forms. Both aspects may be clearly observed in the architecture and decoration of the Djeser-Djeseru complex at Deir el-Bahari. The evidence suggests that the ingenious arrangement of the cult and its material background was based in the deep knowledge of the daily and yearly solar cycles.

Solar aspects of the Old Kingdom royal mortuary architecture

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The architecture of the royal mortuary complexes of the Old Kingdom clearly show that there was a close relationship between the religious beliefs and funerary architecture in Ancient Egypt. Unfortunately, the shortage of chronologically relevant religious texts makes it very difficult if not impossible to define the extent and character of this influence. The paper will discuss this issue on the basis of the evidence from the Memphite necropolis.

Protection of Sunrise: Shu, Tefnut and Ra in the Pyramid Texts

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The oldest surviving corpus of the ancient Egyptian religious texts, the Pyramid Texts, provide us with several attestations about links of the main sun god, Ra, and the first divine pair (according to the Heliopolitan cosmogony), Shu and Tefnut. In later times, such a connection can be observed in the fact that Ra and Atum, who was considered to be the creator of Shu and Tefnut, often merged in their roles. Moreover, it can be seen in the fact that Shu and Tefnut were referred to as the “Eyes of Ra” in Egyptian sources. This paper aims at establishing the link on the basis of a study of appropriate spells of the Pyramid Texts.

'Apis is Ptah, Apis is Re, Apis is Horus, son of Isis': the solar aspect of the Apis bull and the royal ideology of the Late Period

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The Apis bull, known as the herald of the creator-god Ptah at Memphis since the early New Kingdom onward, physically embodied the ideology of ancient Egyptian kingship, especially apparent during the First Millennium BCE. The passage of the so-called Demotic Chronicle (col. 5.12-13), a series of oracular sayings mixed with allusions to historical and dynastic events during the fourth century BCE but preserved on a papyrus from the early second century BCE, contains the full explanation of the divine nature of the living Memphite sacred bull ('Apis is Ptah, Apis is Ra, Apis is Horus, son of Isis'), currently fully neglected in modern historiography. The association of the Apis bull with the creator and sun god Atum of Heliopolis, which represent the sunset and the nightly journey of the sun as well as the god that crown the new king in Lower Egyptian context, became current already during the Ramesside era in the form 'Apis-Atum-Horus in one', symbolizing the royal circle, and fully corresponding with the notion in the Demotic Chronicle. Atum is also directly associated with the Apis bull (as 'Apis-Atum with two horns on his head') on the official royal Apis stelae from the Serapeum at Saqqara, starting with the year 23 of Amasis (548 BCE) onward. The aim of this talk is to investigate mentioned aspect within the framework of the royal ideology of the Late Period, stressing the importance of the Apis cult for usurper-kings.

The sun temple of Niuserra: open questions and new evidences.

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After its discovery by the German archaeologist Ludwig Borchardt in 1898, the sun temple of Niuserra had never been archaeologically re-investigated, whereas several aspects of the temple architecture and plan, as well as of its overall meaning, are not completely sound.

Therefore, in 2010 an Italian team started a new archaeological survey therein with the main goal of re-evaluating all the archaeological data still available on the site, in order to provide an updated plan of the temple, a new 3D reconstruction and a wider comprehension of the monument.

To reach this goal traditional methods of archaeological investigation were used side by side with new technologies of acquisition, reconstruction and interconnection of archaeological data. In particular, in order to let all 3D and 2D dataset be mutually interconnected, a BIM (Building Information Modelling) project has been then developed. Thanks to this new methodological approach, currently underdeveloped in archaeology, it is now possible not only to analyse the whole architecture of the temple but also to produce categories of environmental and technological objects which represent the 3D semantic of the temple.

This combination of a varied set of data and data analysis eventually allows us to address some of the main questions regarding the temple architecture and meaning. At the same time this also opens new research questions and perspectives which are currently the objective of a recently launched research project aimed at the investigation of the entire area of the Abu Ghurab site (project title: "*Rise and Development of the Solar Cult and Architecture in Third Millennium BC Egypt*", under the auspices of the Czech Science Foundation - GAČR).

Sahura's and Hatshepsut's Punt Reliefs in Comparison.

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The discovery of some blocks from the causeway of Sahure's pyramid at Abusir (1994-2004) and their publication (El Awadi 2009) have already given a fundamental contribution to Egyptology. They allowed both to revise the history of the beginning of the 5th dynasty, with a particular focus on royal kinship, and to update our knowledge on the figurative repertoires of Old Kingdom royal temples.

Among the bas-reliefs, those referring to the expedition to the land of Punt have been the object of a great interest among scholars, as they confirm a historical datum previously known only from the Annals of the Palermo Stone. Obviously, this exotic and demanding journey also recalled, to Egyptologists, the well-known scenes from the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahari. In an old article of mine (1993), I suggested not to read the Hatshepsut's Punt reliefs as a completely realistic representation of that land and of the occurred events, and to insert and contextualize the complex of scenes within the whole figurative and textual program of the temple.

This paper actually discusses *whether* and *how* part of Hatshepsut's figurative program (and not only the "Punt scenes") might have been, in some way, influenced by Sahure's bas-reliefs.

Heliopolis in the Old Kingdom: A view from inside.

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The Egyptian-German Mission, carried out by the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities, the Egyptian Museum of the University of Leipzig and the University of Applied Sciences at Matariya has focused its investigations on the main temenos of the temple of the sun. Even though all features of the 3rd millennium BC cannot be reached because of the level of the subsoil water, a number of interesting observations was obtained by core drillings and finds from residual layers in more recent periods. In addition some ideas about reconstructing the context of well known objects of the 3rd millennium, like the fragments of Djoser and the obelisk of Teti from Matariya, will be presented.