



BENEATH THE PYRAMIDS

Egypt's Greatest Secret Uncovered

ANDREW COLLINS

Exploring Egypt's Lost Underworld for the First Time



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Andrew Collins is a science and history writer and the author of various books that challenge the way we perceive the past. They include *From the Ashes of Angels* (1996), which shows that the Watchers of the book of Enoch were shamans responsible for the Neolithic revolution and that their homeland—the biblical Eden—was southeast Turkey, where archaeologists have recently found the oldest stone temple in the world; *Gods of Eden* (1998), which reveals that Egyptian civilization is thousands of years older than is conventionally believed; *Gateway to Atlantis* (2000), which demonstrates that Plato’s Atlantis was located in Cuba and the Bahamas; and *The Cygnus Mystery* (2006), which argues that veneration of the Cygnus constellation was responsible for the world’s earliest sky religions. Andrew, born in 1957, lives with his wife Sue near Marlborough, Wiltshire, England.

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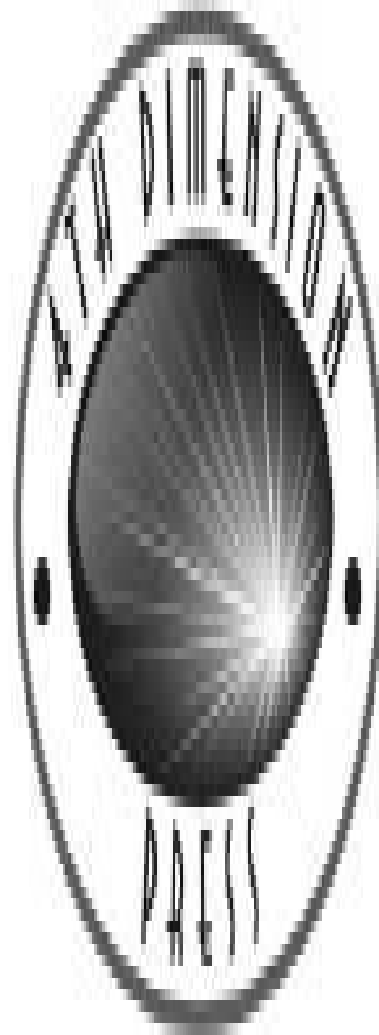


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ANDREW COLLINS

WITH ADDITIONAL RESEARCH BY
NIGEL SKINNER-SIMPSON AND RODNEY HALE



4th Dimension Press



Virginia Beach



Virginia

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1st Printing, September 2009

Printed in the U.S.A.

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A.R.E. Press

215 67th Street

Virginia Beach, VA 23451-2061

ISBN-13: 978-0-87604-571-8 (trade paper)

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To Bernard,

without whom my quest to

find Giza's lost underworld

would never have begun

I have come to Rostau in order to know the secret of the Duat . . .

Spell 241, The Coffin Texts, c. 2134-1786 BC.



View of the Sphinx during Giovanni Caviglia's excavations in 1817, after Henry Salt.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank John Van Auken, Kevin Todeschi, Cassie McQuagge, Alison Ray, Claire Gardner, Karen Davis, Jennie Taylor Martin, Amanda Nieves, Cathy Merchand, and all at the Edgar Cayce Foundation and the A.R.E. Press for everything they have done to make this book a success; Greg and Lora Little, for their unerring support and friendship, which is beyond words; Rodney Hale and Nigel Skinner-Simpson, for coming on board and bringing alive this fascinating project; Doris Van Auken, for her patience and virtues during the editing of this book; David Southwell, for the inspiration that initiated this current quest after the completion of *Gods of Eden* in 1998 and for his invaluable think tank sessions, without which *Beneath the Pyramids* could not have existed; Bernard, the original inspiration behind my quest to find the so-called Crystal Chambers, with its enigmatic “Green Chamber” (you changed my life forever, and it has been a pleasure knowing you in this incarnation); and Richard Ward, for the questing part in England, which gave us the tools to find the answers in Egypt.

Can I also thank SheerFaith for the extraordinary cover artwork; Pete Glastonbury, Jürgen Krönig, Mike Grierson, and Nik Douglas at World Art & Antiques, Martin Gray of sacredsites.com, Wally Pacholka of astronews.com, and Connie and Ken Doty, for the use of their superb photographic images; Yuri Leitch, for his fantastic artwork; Renn and Matt Kyd, Buster and Abbie Todd, Caroline Wise, and Michael Staley, for reading the manuscript; Robert Bauval, for his healthy criticisms and for curbing my Cygnus excesses in Egypt; Catherine Hale, for her foreign text translations; Colin Reader, Robert Schoch, and John Anthony West, for their helpful advice on the evolution of the Giza pyramid field; Joe Jochmans, for introducing me to the Edfu building texts and the more scholarly side of Hall of Records research back in 1985; Alan Alford, Paul Bader, Don Carroll, Eileen Buchanan, Adam Crawl, Janet Morris, Chris Ogilvie Herald, and Denis Montgomery, for their correspondence; John Wilding, Esther Smith, and all at the Henge Shop, Stephen Gawtry of Watkins Bookshop, Gerry and Bali Beskin of Atlantis Bookshop, Gareth Mills of Speaking Tree, the staff at Mysteries Bookshop, Whitley and Anne Strieber, William Henry and Linda Moulton Howe of Dreamland/Unknown Country/Revelations; Widget,

Claire, and all at EMTV, Ross Hemsworth and Penny Dando of Glastonbury Radio; Adriano Forgione of Fenix magazine, Franco Cappiello of Hera magazine, Massimo Bonasorte, David Jones of New Dawn magazine, Philip Coppens, Graham Hancock, and Santha Faiia, for their continued support and promotion of my work.

Beyond that, can I thank Amanda and Geoff Baker, Lynn and Carl McCoy, Jim and Storm Constantine, Drs. J. J. and Desiree Hurtak, Rachel and Paul Weston, Jonathan Bright, Bill Brown, Gouda Fayed, Dr. Zahi Hawass, Dr. Salima Ikram, Joe Jahoda, Rossella Lorenzi, Dr. Amanda–Alice Maravelia, Ali el-Samman, Hussein el-Mor and family, the Awyan family of Nazlet el-Samman (may your father, Hakim, rest in peace), Joan Hale, Noel Hale, Ian Lawton, Kathleen McGowan, Glenn Kreisberg, Gary Osborn, Emilio Spedicato, and Colin Wilson, for their much appreciated help and support.

Finally, a special thanks to the Cayce family, particularly Leslie and Charles Thomas, for their interest and advice in ensuring the accuracy of the book's historical account of the Cayce organization's origins and development of archeological research efforts in Egypt and for their continued interest in the exploration of the Giza plateau; Don Dickinson, who has given continual support to the research and healing aims of the A.R.E., and my wife Sue, for being the light of my world and the best accomplice in whatever life throws at us. I offer this book to the memory of Ann Smith, Sue's mum, whose sad passing in February reminded me of the fragility of life and how we need to savor and enjoy every moment in this world.

Andrew Collins, Marlborough, UK, September 23, 2009.

Prelude

The Lost Underworld

The possibility of actually locating Giza's lost underworld had been a fantasy for so long that I expected myself to be cool, calm, and collected if ever I found it. But as I peered through the small opening into a large, natural cavern, partially hewn by human hands, my heart raced and I gasped for breath. No one knew what lay ahead or even how safe it might be after thousands of years of decay and neglect.

Standing on a stone precipice, surveying what lay ahead, I almost turned back. Inside me now was a mixture of trepidation and fear, tinged by the overwhelming stench of bat guano, which seemed to pervade the very darkness. Yet I knew there was now no other option but to step inside.

Apprehensively, I descended, somewhat cautiously, into Giza's subterranean realm and was struck by the knowledge that so many others searching for the Hall of Records had experienced the same dream—yet here I was at last, actually entering a cave system long rumored to exist beneath the plateau.

As I navigated the fallen rock debris in an attempt to reach the floor of the vast cave chamber, I could not help but think about the two men who had explored this network of "Catacombs" nearly two hundred years earlier. Henry Salt (1780-1827), the British consul general in Egypt, and his colleague, the redoubtable Italian explorer and former sea captain Giovanni Battista Caviglia (1770-1845), had chanced upon the cave system during their systematic search of the plateau. They penetrated several hundred yards into the rock before finally coming upon

an entrance into a “spacious” chamber, which connected with three others of equal size. Who carved them and in what age was the mystery to be solved.

By now, Salt and Caviglia had seen enough, and without so much as a sniff of hidden treasure, the British consul general had ceased his exploration and exited the caves, leaving the Italian to pursue them further. Caviglia later advanced in another direction for “three hundred feet further.” Yet having found nothing of significance, he too gave up, leaving this labyrinthine world, never to return.

After that time, the entrance to the cave system was eventually forgotten. It has remained obscure through to the present day, and never in a million years did I expect to find it in quite the manner we did. Never could I have hoped to walk in the footsteps of great adventurers such as Salt and Caviglia, exploring a subterranean world that might well hold the key to understanding the very origins of ancient Egyptian civilization.

Discovering unexplored caves may not seem earthshaking in archaeological terms. Certainly, Giza’s underworld may pale into insignificance when compared to the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb or the opening of a tomb live on TV. Yet the idea that a subterranean world exists in the vicinity of the Giza pyramid field has enthralled Egyptologists and explorers alike ever since the age of Salt and Caviglia, and for good reason. Ancient Egyptian texts dating back three thousand years allude to the existence here of a secret chamber known as the Underworld of the Soul and the Shetayet—literally, the “Tomb of God.” All pharaohs wanted to learn the secrets of this hidden chamber in order to create their own final resting place, otherwise their souls could not return in death to the cosmic source of life among the stars of the northern sky.

Roman writers perpetuated the mystery of an underworld beneath the Pyramids of Egypt, while much later, Arab travelers—influenced by tales heard from Coptic Christian monks and priests—spoke specifically of an antediluvian race depositing a record of its arts and sciences in subterranean corridors deep below

the plateau, prior to some universal conflagration and deluge. The more superstitious of the local population spoke of the existence of a vast network of catacombs that stretched for miles beneath the plateau. They were haunted, they said, by spectral beings, and in here a man could very easily lose his mind, or even his life. Such legends sprang from the existence everywhere on the plateau of hundreds of tombs and sepulchres. Many of these open out to reveal spacious rooms, adorned with broken statues and fading frescoes that have fired the imagination for thousands of years.

So why should the discovery back in 1817 of a natural cave system, enhanced in places by human hands, be of even the remotest significance when so much more still awaits investigation in Giza? The answer is that not only did the entrance to the caves become obscure, but their very whereabouts was almost entirely lost. It is easily understandable how this came about, for since Salt and Caviglia found nothing of significance, very few people ever came to know of their existence.

A knowledge regarding the existence of Giza's hidden underworld spurs on more recent claims that the discovery of this subterranean realm will herald a new dawn of enlightenment. Yet these claims come not from some wizened Arab mystic encountered in Cairo's Khan el-Khalili bazaar or a dusty Coptic text languishing in the neglected library of a desert monastery, but from the "readings" of America's most well-known psychic, Edgar Cayce. Since his death in 1945, the Edgar Cayce Foundation has established a large headquarters in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and set up affiliated groups in twenty-two countries. Among its aims are to promote and to confirm the prophecies and predictions of its mentor and founder and—under the auspices of its research body, the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.)—discover what Cayce's readings refer to as the "Hall of Records."

For six decades the A.R.E. has encouraged and supported exploration of Giza in an attempt not only to verify the existence of the Hall of Records but to seek its entrance, which the readings imply will be found in the vicinity of the Sphinx

monument. Indeed, it is no secret that the organization has been behind a good deal of the archaeological work carried out on the plateau since the 1970s. Without its help and support in this project, Giza's lost underworld would have remained just a few throwaway lines in Salt's forgotten memoirs. It is thus only fitting that we begin this journey with an account of just how Edgar Cayce came to instigate the greatest quest of discovery Egypt has seen for a very long time.



Part

One

Prophecy

1

-

The Sleeping Prophet

Edgar Cayce (1877–1945), known to many as the “sleeping prophet,” was a tall, lean man with a thin face, receding hair, wire-rimmed glasses, and an unusually pleasant smile. A dedicated, if somewhat unorthodox, Christian with a quiet, polite personality, he adhered to a strong spiritual approach to life. Born in Beverly, just outside Hopkinsville, Kentucky, on March 18, 1877, Cayce discovered at the age of thirteen that he possessed an extraordinary talent. The boy found that in order to “read” a school book, all he needed to do was place it under his pillow at night, and in the morning its entire contents would be in his head.

After leaving school, Cayce worked on a family farm before taking a job at a local bookstore. Then in 1900, at the age of twenty-three, a partial paralysis of the vocal cords left him unable to speak beyond a whisper. By this time, he was a door-to-door insurance salesman who also sold books and stationery on behalf of his employers, so an acute medical condition of this nature cannot have helped his position. It was probably for this reason that by the end of the year, he had become an apprentice at the studio of a photographer in Hopkinsville. Yet, strangely, the following spring, a traveling hypnotist enabled him to use his vocal chords normally after placing him in a state of hypnosis, even though Cayce was unable to speak again afterward.

Medical Readings

Realizing that hypnosis held the key to providing a solution to his medical condition, Cayce self-induced a sleep state in the presence of physician Dr. Al Layne and, using his own vocal cords, provided a remedy for himself, enabling him to speak normally again. Thereafter, Cayce began working with Layne's patients, falling into a sleep state and diagnosing their medical conditions, for which he would prescribe a suitable remedy of a typically holistic or alternative nature. After waking up, Cayce would have no recall of these "medical readings" or what had transpired while in a sleep state. What made all of this even more bizarre was that the remedies actually worked, even though Cayce had no obvious knowledge of medicine in his waking life.

Very quickly, news of Cayce's extraordinary talent spread far and wide, resulting in many thousands of people flocking to his home in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, seeking readings. Among those treated was Cayce's own wife, Gertrude, who in 1911 was diagnosed with tuberculosis. The condition was so severe that it was considered terminal. During her own reading Cayce prescribed his wife a rather unusual remedy—heroin.

"Yes, I know. It was drastic," she commented years later, "but in the amount prescribed, it worked. Besides, I was to breathe the fumes of apple brandy."¹

The apple brandy had to be poured into a charred oak keg, and she must have inhaled a barrelful, apparently.

Incredibly the tuberculosis disappeared, and Gertrude made a total recovery.² In fact, she outlived her husband by three months, passing away on April 1, 1945.

This remarkable confirmation of Cayce's hidden abilities was one of the major turning points in his career, for he knew that if the reading had failed, then he would have lost the love of his life, who had placed her full confidence in his psychically inspired remedies.

Edgar Cayce seemed to know instantly what was wrong with a patient. How his brain was able to analyze medical conditions and then prescribe a suitable remedy is beyond rational explanation. Perhaps such data is accessible through quantum, nonlocal processes, in which the information is instantly present both in the patient and in those whom they encounter. Under the right circumstances, this knowledge can then be externalized during altered states of consciousness.

In 1913 Cayce moved from Hopkinsville to Selma, Alabama, where he began dedicating his life more to helping others while also attempting to assist the requests of wealthy benefactors in Texas. This he did by predicting changes in the stock market and providing information on the location of potential oil wells, gold deposits, and even buried treasure, although his success rate in this area was not brilliant. Gradually, this lifestyle started to take its toll on Cayce, whose own health began to deteriorate, forcing him to reduce the number of readings he could give per day. In an attempt to escape the pressure, Cayce relocated in 1923 to Dayton, Ohio, where he remained until 1925, when a New York stockbroker named Morton Blumenthal offered to finance the building of a hospital and school that earlier readings had recommended be founded in Virginia Beach, Norfolk County, Virginia.

Cayce now set about creating a headquarters on a plot purchased close to the seafront in Virginia Beach. Yet somehow it failed to attract the business he had hoped for, and following legal wrangles with Blumenthal, the estate was sold off into private hands in 1931—the inaugural year of the Edgar Cayce Foundation—and was only purchased back many years later. From that time forward, the sleeping prophet started to concentrate on giving sitters what he termed life readings, often including “astrological influences,” which focused more on a person's psychological condition and how it was affected by previous “life

experiences,” that is, past lives, which he and his supporters believed in wholeheartedly as part of their somewhat unorthodox form of Christianity.

Mythical Civilizations

About 14,256 readings were given by Cayce prior to his death, following a stroke in 1945, and of these, nine thousand related to health matters, while more than five thousand featured the supposed history of mythical civilizations. Among them was the lost continent of Atlantis, in the Atlantic Ocean, and Mu, in the Pacific. The readings spoke also of an extremely ancient civilization in Egypt that came into existence sometime around 11,000 BC. Many readings told of its genesis from an indigenous Egyptian race and a conquering dynasty from the Caucasus (an extensive mountain range on the edge of Asia and Europe that today embraces the countries of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and southern Russia). These invaders overran the Nile Valley and seized control of the country's emerging culture, which was also being swelled by hordes of refugees inbound from Atlantis. Apparently, this great island empire, first written about by the Greek philosopher Plato in the mid-fourth century BC, had just succumbed to a devastating cataclysm.

Cayce's readings spoke of Egypt's first civilization as having created the earliest built structures in Giza. They included impressive buildings, with names such as the Temple of Sacrifice and the Temple Beautiful, as well as a great city with towering pyramids that had once stood between the Great Sphinx and the position of the Nile, at present about five miles (8 kms) to the east of the plateau. However, this civilization's most magnificent achievement was the creation of the Great Pyramid, which in one reading from 1932 was said to have been built over a one hundred-year period between 10,490 BC and 10,390 BC.³

The Age of Ra-Ta

The spiritual leader of Cayce's Egyptian civilization was a high priest named Ra-Ta (or just Ra, the sun god of pharaonic Egypt), who the readings reveal was one of Cayce's own "life experiences." Members of the sleeping prophet's immediate family, as well as some of his closest friends and colleagues, were said to have shared in this life in Egypt, either as incoming Atlanteans, indigenous Egyptians, or members of the Caucasian royal dynasty.

What became of Egypt's first civilization is left open, for although a large number of readings relating to this period offer dates in the region of 11,000–10,000 BC, next to nothing is said about what happened between this time and the establishment of Egypt's first accepted royal dynasty, following the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt, sometime around 3100 BC. Indeed, after the age of Ra-Ta, Cayce's readings tended to focus away from Egypt altogether.

Conflicting Chronologies

The authenticity of Edgar Cayce's fourteen thousand or so readings is not the subject of this present work. All that might be said is that Cayce's modern-day detractors cite various of his prophecies, which have clearly not come to pass, as evidence that he was a poor psychic, if one at all. Yet these assertions are suitably countered by Cayce's supporters, who celebrate those that have come to pass, adding that in many instances his readings have been misinterpreted and that they sometimes contain human error. This should always be taken into account when assessing the overall nature of his remarkable abilities, especially in the field of alternative medicine.

Cayce's vision of Egypt at the end of the last Ice Age, c. 11,000–10,000 BC, conflicts greatly with our current understanding of Egyptian chronology, in particular what he had to say about the age of the Great Pyramid and the evolution of the Giza pyramid field. Graffiti found within the relieving chambers, along with ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman accounts, all clearly point toward a construction date for the Great Pyramid in the region of c. 2600–2550 BC, when the throne of Egypt was occupied by a pharaoh named Khufu (the Greek Cheops). He was the second pharaoh of Egypt's Fourth Dynasty (for the dates of all pharaohs and dynasties mentioned in this book, see the chronology on page 6⁴). Most likely is that the Great Pyramid was conceived originally as a royal sepulchre, although it may well have been the setting for the performance of the Egyptian mysteries prior to its final sealing, following the death and interment of the king, whose body has never been recovered.

I find it frustratingly difficult to imagine Edgar Cayce's Ra-Ta civilization. Indeed, its very existence contradicts almost everything we know about the emergence of human society in Egypt's Nile Valley during this distant epoch. This said, having worked with psychics all my life and knowing a little of how their minds work, I would not dismiss outright Cayce's vision of the past. Yet such psychically inspired information can never be fully accurate—one cannot

take it as historically viable. Instead, I believe it is important to read between the lines of such data and look for emerging patterns which do parallel either known historical reality or trends and predictions. In this way, psychic information, such as Cayce's life readings, can be examined in an entirely different manner, an attitude we shall adopt as we return now to Cayce's greatest legacy—the search for the Hall of Records.

EGYPTIAN PERIOD	DYNASTIES		MENTIONED KINGS	SUGGESTED YEARS OF REIGN
Predynastic				3500-3200
Protodynastic	0			3200-3100
Early Dynastic	I-II	I	NARMER HOR-AHA (MENES)	3100-2700 c. 3100 c. 3050
Old Kingdom	III-VII	III IV V	DJOSER KHUFU DJEDEFRE KHAFRE MENKAURE USERKAF NIUSERRE UNAS	2700-2137 2678-2649 2596-2573 2573-2550 2550-2525 2512-2484 2480-2473 2443-2432 2370-2340
First Intermediate	VIII-X			2137-?
Middle Kingdom	XI-XII			2134-1786
Second Intermediate	XIII-XVII			1786-1575
New Kingdom	XVIII-XX	XVIII XIX XX	AMENHOTEP I AMENHOTEP II THUTMOSIS IV TUTANKHAMUN SETI I RAMESES II RAMESES III	1575-1087 1550-1528 1436-1413 1413-1405 1347-1339 1308-1291? 1290-1224 1182-1151
Third Intermediate	XXI-XXIV			1087-715?
Late Period	XXV-XXXI	XXV	SHABAKA	770?-332 716-695

1. Egyptian chronology showing the kings mentioned in the book (after Gardiner).

The Mystery of Mysteries

At midday on July 8, 1925, Cayce, dressed as usual in a smart suit, did as he always did before a reading—greeted his guest, then removed his glasses, loosened his tie, and lay down on the couch in his office, which by this time was in Dayton, Ohio. At one side, Gladys Davis Turner, Cayce’s stenographer from 1923 until his death in 1945, sat down at a small desk, pencil and paper ready, while in front of the psychic sat his wife, Gertrude, acting as “conductor,” next to the sitter, designated in this instance as “195 . . . (Realtor, Mfg., Protestant Family).”

The introduction of a rolling sequence of number codes to designate individual sitters was twofold. First, the system—introduced by Gladys Davis Turner—provided the discretion by which the identity of the sitter might be suitably preserved. Second, it made the recording of individual sessions, along with the cross-referencing of regular sitters mentioned in readings (both their own and other people’s), that much more efficient.

Sitter “Mr. [195]” that day in July 1925 can now be revealed as forty-two-year-old Thomas B. Brown, a business colleague of New York entrepreneur David E. Kahn and stockbroker Morton Blumenthal, two of Cayce’s most generous benefactors. Brown was also a close friend of the Cayce family. His designated number appears in connection with various sittings from 1921 onward, most of them concerned with either past lives or stockbrokerage activities.

Once Cayce had closed his eyes and induced a sleep state, achieved without any

kind of stimulant or encouragement, the reading got under way. With his eyes flickering in an unusual manner, he spoke in a slow, soft tone with long pauses between sentences. The sitter was informed about a “life experience” in Egypt during the Ra-Ta period, where he had been a man named Arsra, an artificer and stone carver to a king named Araaraart, who belonged to the conquering dynasty from the Caucasus.



2. Edgar Cayce seated at his home and office on Arctic Crescent in Virginia Beach, VA. It was on this couch that he would induce a sleep state for his “readings.”

More significantly, Cayce’s subconscious voice told Mr. Brown that during his lifetime in Egypt he had been the “founder,” or architect, behind that “mystery of mysteries,” the Great Sphinx—the first time that there had been any mention of Giza’s famous leonine monument, which other readings date to the remote age of history from c. 11,000 to 10,000 BC.

Excavations in Giza

At the time, very little was known about the history and true origins of the Sphinx. Yet, curiously, in December 1925, just a few months after Cayce gave his reading, the French archaeologist Émile Baraize (1874–1952), an engineer for the Egyptian Antiquities Service, commenced an eleven-year project to completely clear away the sand and debris that had long engulfed the monument's body. Baraize's Sphinx expedition became an international news story, although it is unlikely to have influenced Cayce's Sphinx reading in July that same year.

This is not to say that Egypt was not in the news prior to this time, for plainly it was. New black and white stills and newsreel footage of breathtaking treasures being removed from the tomb of Tutankhamun, discovered two and a half years earlier, were being released more or less weekly. Indeed, the Western world was very quickly descending into an Egyptian frenzy, with everything from art to fashion, architecture, theatre, and gift souvenirs being influenced by the grandeur of this magnificent civilization, something that by the end of the decade would burgeon into the distinctive style we know today as art deco.

In 1925 no one knew the exact age of the Sphinx, although it was assumed to belong to the same building phase as the nearby Great Pyramid and its two slightly smaller neighbors, which all date to Egypt's Fourth Dynasty, c. 2620–2480 BC. So suggesting that the Sphinx dated back to the end of the last Ice Age, c. 11,000–10,000 BC, should have seemed ludicrous. Yet we find that already, by this age, Giza's 240-foot-long (73 meters) reclining lion—carved out of the limestone bedrock, complete with a human head of a pharaoh, sporting the all-so-familiar nemes headdress—was already being associated with this distant epoch of history.

In 1907 the English poet, mythologist, and self-taught Egyptologist Gerald Massey (1828–1907) wrote in his ground-breaking book, *Egypt the Light of the World*, that since the Sphinx faces east, where the sun rises at the time of the equinoxes (the two days of the year with equal day and night), it might once have gazed out at the rising of its celestial counterpart—the constellation of Leo, the zodiacal lion. Yet the last time that the stars of Leo had risen with the equinoctial sun was in the astronomical age of Leo, c. 11,500–9000 BC. Acknowledging this fact, Massey had boldly asserted: “we may date the Sphinx as a monument which was reared by these great [Egyptian] builders and thinkers, who lived so largely out of themselves, some thirteen thousand years ago.”¹ This, of course, was the same general time frame now being offered by Cayce for its construction, even though it seems highly unlikely that he was ever witness to Massey’s published works, which only received a limited circulation.

Inside the Hall of Records

What is remarkable about the life reading from July 1925 is that after Cayce revealed that the sitter, Thomas B. Brown, was responsible for the construction of the Sphinx monument, he added that Mr. Brown had

[built], laid, the foundations; that is, superintended same, figured out the geometrical position of same in relation to those buildings as were put up of that connecting the sphinx. And the data concerning same may be found in the vaults in the base of the sphinx.²

So in addition to confining the Sphinx to some remote age of human history, the very same reading had spoken of subterranean “vaults” beneath this monument, which were said to contain hidden “data” going back to c. 11,000–10,000 BC. It was Cayce’s first ever mention of what would later become known as the Hall of Records.

“Temples” Inside the Sphinx

Yet the sleeping prophet’s reading of July 1925 concerning the existence of subterranean vaults beneath the Sphinx cannot be seen as unique. In 1913 the American Sunday edition of the Times of India had carried a feature on the recent excavations of American archaeologist George A. Reisner (1867–1942), professor of Egyptology at Harvard University and curator of the Egyptian Collections at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, who was at the time working in the vicinity of the Sphinx monument. The article, which had originally appeared in the British magazine *The Sphere*, a kind of National Enquirer of its day, speculated on the alleged discovery by Reisner of “hidden temples within the natural rock of which the Sphinx is formed.” It went on to say:

Not only is the head of the Sphinx occupied by two small chambers, one superimposed above the other, but the actual body of the Sphinx is also occupied by a larger pillar-lined temple with passages leading off in several directions. The actual tomb of Menes, the great but mysterious founder of remote Egypt, is also supposed to be within the Sphinx.³

Accompanying these words was an artist’s impression of the Sphinx in cross section entitled “Diagrammatic view of the discoveries recently made of hidden temples within the Sphinx.” Various hewn chambers and connecting stairways are shown inside the body and head of the leonine monument (see figure 3).

REMARKABLE DISCOVERIES WITHIN THE SPHINX.



Diagrammatic view of the discoveries recently made of hidden temples within the Sphinx.

Reported reports are coming from Egypt of the excavations which is being carried for the remarkable discoveries now being made by Professor G. A. Reisner, Egyptologist, of Harvard University. He is revealing a series of hidden temples within the breast rock of which the Sphinx is formed. The drawings which in their appearance in the details as the supposed drawings are being made by the explorer are not yet available. The temples and passages are, however, shown in their present position. Not only in the head of the Sphinx occupied by two small chambers, one supposed to be the tomb of Amenhotep III, but the actual body of the Sphinx is also occupied by a larger pillared temple with passages leading off in several directions. The actual tomb of Amenhotep III, the great and important founder of temple Egypt, is also supposed to be within the Sphinx. The most remarkable discovery may be looked for at any time.

3. Cross section of the Sphinx from an edition of *The Sphere* magazine from 1913, showing compartments and stairways falsely rumored to have been found by American Egyptologist George A. Reisner.

As far as can be ascertained, nothing resembling what is described in the feature was ever found by Reisner or any other excavator—the whole story having stemmed from idle rumors regarding the existence of hidden compartments in the vicinity of the Sphinx. One subterranean passage, cut into the limestone bedrock, was eventually discovered in the rump of the Sphinx. It came to light in early 1926, just a few months after Cayce's reading. Apparently, the son of a reis, or foreman, employed in the services of Émile Baraize, named Mohammed Abd al-Mawgud Fayed, is said to have shown the Frenchman a stone slab beneath which was the previously unrecorded passage. Apparently, the existence of the chamber had been known to Mohammed's grandfather.

Baraize descended into the darkness in an attempt to find the extent of the tunnel, which penetrated beneath the body of the Sphinx. However, after reaching a depth of approximately fifteen feet (4.5 meters), his path was blocked by the local water table. An extension to the tunnel climbed steeply upward before eventually petering out. It was afterward sealed and not opened again until 1980, when the same stone was removed by Mohammed, now an old man, for Dr. Zahi Hawass, the world's best-known Egyptologist, who was at the time directing another attempt, alongside American Egyptologist Dr. Mark Lehner, to excavate the Sphinx enclosure and the nearby Sphinx Temple. Hawass and Lehner determined that the tunnel extends for a distance of approximately forty feet (12 meters) and dates, most likely, to the pharaonic period, although exactly when remains unclear. No significant artifacts have been recovered from the tunnel. More than likely is that the passage, which in no way can be classed as a hewn chamber, was known about all along by the local reis, or head men, working with foreign Egyptologists and thus might have been the cause of the rumors that spread in 1913 regarding the alleged discovery by Reisner of "temples" inside the Sphinx.

Aside from the tunnels in the rump, a natural rock fissure—ending in a small, hewn-out compartment—once existed in the rear half of the Sphinx’s back, before it was filled in with rubble and cement by members of Baraize’s team. Recent claims that this hollowed-out area was in fact a secret chamber which contained hieroglyphs and was once used for secret initiations are groundless,⁴ even though there is some evidence that it might have been used to contain a human burial at some point.⁵

Record Chambers

In subsequent Cayce readings, we learn more about Egypt's Hall of Records, which is spoken of under a variety of names, such as the "Temple of Records," "Pyramid of Records," "House of Records," "Treasure House" or "Storehouse of Records," as well as the "Record House," "Record Chamber" and, finally, the "Record Tomb." All seem to refer to the same place, although some commentators have concluded that Cayce might have been referring to more than one hidden structure.

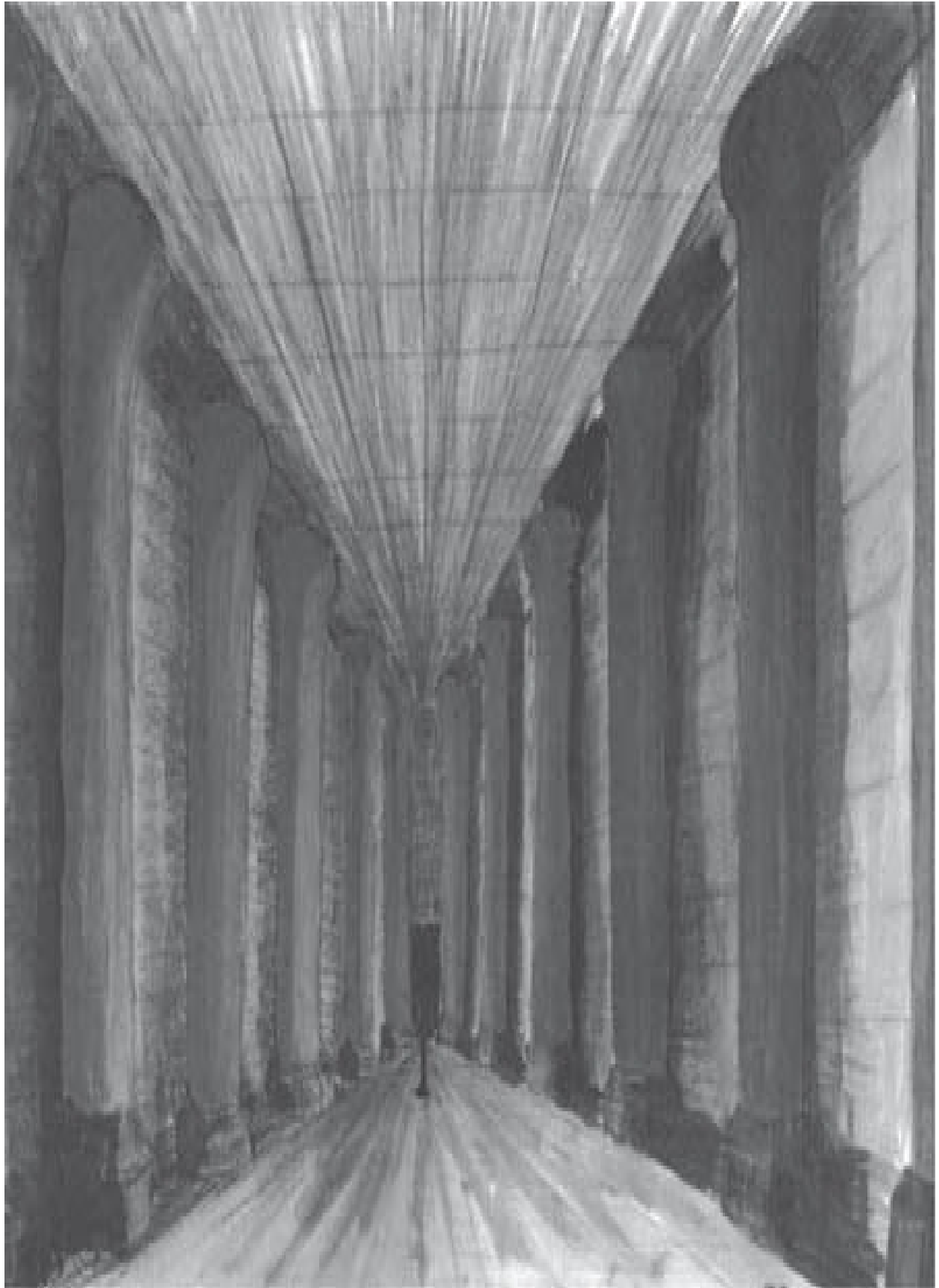
The purpose of this "sealed room of records" was, as the name suggests, to contain not only a record of those who founded Egypt's first civilization, but also "plaques" and "tablets" recording the life experiences of individuals incarnated during the Ra-Ta period. These records are apparently inscribed on stone and represent fuller versions of what Cayce himself supplied to sitters. This in itself is revealing, for quite separate to the readings that concerned these underground store chambers are Cayce's accounts of entering a kind of astral hall of records while in a state of sleep hypnosis.

In 1934, for instance, Gladys Davis Turner noted that Cayce, "instead of going through blackness and seeing horrible things" during his reading, had "wound up and up and up through a very large column . . . and came out where there was the house of records."⁶ Following a more revealing session two years later, in 1936, Gladys noted that "EC told of going for the records for this entity in a different manner from that experienced here-to-fore; [he] traveled on a blue-purple-silver light, went straight to the house of records without passing through the darkness or horrible sights or planes."⁷

Then, in 1938, Cayce had gone to the same library-style "hall of records" to gain the sitter's life reading and, while there, was "given a book that was very large

(tall and wide), beautifully bound but quite thin.”⁸ Sometimes, the “keeper of the records,” an “old man,” was encountered, to whom Cayce’s astral self would ask out loud for the reading. A book would then be removed from a particular book stack and given to the psychic for the duration of the sitting.

Clearly, these accounts, which are rarely published, demonstrate that Cayce’s sleep hypnosis enabled him to enter what he believed was some kind of astral hall of records, within which was preserved a record of the sitter’s life experiences as well as those of everyone ever incarnated on earth. Such a belief amply reflects the idea of the “akashic records,” said to exist in the “ether” and to contain a record of all human experience as well as the entire history of the universe since creation. It was a concept born from the writings and teachings of Russian-born mystic Helena Petrova Blavatsky (1831–1891), the founder in 1875 of the Theosophical Society.



4. Artist's impression of the Egyptian Hall of Records. Cayce believed that during what were termed life readings, he would enter an etheric "hall of records" to access a sitter's "life experiences," an idea paralleling the theosophical concept of the akashic records.

Thus it is possible that Cayce's vision of an Egyptian Hall of Records (I say "Egyptian," as his readings spoke of two others—one in Mexico's Yucatan peninsula and the other in the waters off the island of Bimini in the Bahamas) was thought of initially as a physical counterpart to the astral hall of records accessed during sleep states.

Between the Sphinx and the River

As to the whereabouts of the Egyptian Hall of Records, the readings tell us that it lay in the direction of the Nile, at present five miles (8.5 km) east of the pyramid field. It was accessible, apparently, via an entrance in the vicinity of the Great Sphinx, with one 1933 reading being quite specific about its location:

. . . as the sun rises from the waters, the line of the shadow (or light) falls between the paws of the Sphinx, that was later set as the sentinel or guard, and which may not be entered from the connecting chambers from the Sphinx's (right paw) until the time has been fulfilled when the changes must be active in this sphere of man's experience. Between, then, the Sphinx and the river.⁹

It is a matter confirmed in another Cayce reading from 1932, which states that "there is a chamber or passage from the right forepaw to this entrance of the record chamber, or record tomb." However, we are then informed that "[t]his may not be entered without an understanding, for those that were left as guards may not be passed until after a period of their regeneration in the Mount . . ."¹⁰

We will address the possible identity of "the Mount" in chapter ten, but in this reading, the sitter is told that "guards" watch over the "record chamber" and that they cannot be passed without the correct understanding, something which one reading from 1941 suggested would not be possible until "fifty-eight," that is, 1958, at the earliest.¹¹ Not that the Hall of Records would necessarily be found then, only that the understanding to do so would not be available until this time. Indeed, the search would not begin in earnest until 1998—the date when a metaphysical time lock preventing entry into this subterranean realm would finally fall away, making access possible at last.¹²

The Osiris Tomb

Unfortunately, the Hall of Records was not found in 1998, even though it was widely held by Cayce supporters and New Agers alike that something of great importance would occur in Giza that year. So much did people believe this to be the case that Dr. Zahi Hawass, the then undersecretary of state for the Giza monuments, on behalf of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), chose 1998 to announce the "discovery" of a multilevel shaft tomb located beneath the stone causeway that runs between the Second Pyramid and the Sphinx. Now proposed as a symbolic "Tomb of Osiris" or "Osiris Shaft," this "Water Shaft"—the focus of much speculation and rumors during the late 1990s—had in fact been explored as early as 1934–1935 by Dr. Selim Hassan (1893–1961), the director of excavations on behalf of the American University in Cairo.¹³

The Osiris Shaft consists of three vertical tiers, one on top of the other, with each level accessed via a vertically descending passage. The lowest chamber contains an empty, granite sarcophagus that is sunken into a raised, rectangular platform. At each corner of the platform are the broken remains of a pillar, the whole monument having been carved from the bedrock. Owing to the presence of the local water table, the area surrounding the sarcophagus is now flooded, suggesting that in the past, when the water was lower, the platform acted as a symbolic island identified with the burial place of Osiris, Lord of the Underworld (see chapter six).

In a recent paper, Dr. Hawass, today secretary general of the SCA, has written that pot shards from Egypt's Sixth Dynasty, 2340–2199 BC, were found during excavations in the lowest level, suggesting that the structure dates to this early age. However, the sunken sarcophagus found in the same room is now thought to date to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, known also as the Saitic period, c. 672–525 BC.¹⁴ During this time there was a huge revival of interest in both the monuments in Giza and the cult of Osiris and his sister-wife, Isis.

That Dr. Hawass announced the “discovery” of the Osiris Shaft in 1998 is just one small indication of just how much Cayce’s prophecies regarding the existence and anticipated opening of the Hall of Records have affected mainstream Egyptology over the past forty years. Yet, to explore this subject more fully, we must go back to 1957, when the search for Egypt’s Hall of Records really begins.

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Beneath the Bedrock

It was in 1957, the year I was born, that a woman named Marjorie Hansen, remembered under the pseudonym Rhonda James, set sail on a steamer bound for Egypt, ready to take on the Egyptologists at their own game. She was a lifelong supporter of Edgar Cayce and had spent much time at the Edgar Cayce Foundation headquarters in Virginia Beach, studying those readings that appertained to the existence and future opening of the Hall of Records. Some supporters felt that this opening might occur the following year, 1958, because of a reading from 1941 that ambiguously predicted this eventuality.¹ Marjorie wanted to ensure the reality of Cayce's prophecy and so, at the age of twenty-seven, took off to Egypt, with no money to speak of, intent on locating the entrance to the Hall of Records.

Along with a female friend, Marjorie reached Giza in the fall of 1957, just months after the Egyptian government had assumed control of the Suez Canal as a consequence of the unpopular Suez War two years earlier. Also, just before this time, American forces had launched an assault on Beirut, Lebanon, in a confused attempt to beat off threats of an Arab invasion from Iraq, something that cannot have made American tourists very popular in Egypt.

Despite these drawbacks, Marjorie and her friend managed to obtain permission to bore a series of holes some 9.5 feet (3 meters) apart around the base of the Sphinx. This astonishing achievement defies belief, but achieve it they did. Marjorie and her team used industrial drills, which penetrated downward at least 8 feet (2.5 meters) before hitting the ever-present water table—the bane of all excavation work in this area of the plateau. Despite her efforts, the two women

found no obvious signs of underground chambers lurking beneath the right paw of the Sphinx, or anywhere else, for that matter. Yet this was a very bold exercise indeed, and one that opened the doors to a series of high-profile searches for the lost Hall of Records in the years to come. However, these would not begin in earnest until 1973, following the intervention of Edgar Cayce's eldest son, Hugh Lynn, who was by now actively engaged in pursuing his father's greatest archaeological legacy.

The Scholar

In 1972 Hugh Lynn Cayce (1907–1982) persuaded the benefactors of the Edgar Cayce Foundation that it was worth investing a substantial sum of money in projects with the long-term aim of locating underground chambers beneath the plateau in Giza. Also agreed was that the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.) should finance the education in Egyptology of an American student who believed wholeheartedly in the existence of the Hall of Records and was prepared to conduct a full-scale search for its entrance when in a position to do so. His name was Mark Lehner, and he would go on to become one of the most influential and well-respected Egyptologists in the history of excavations in Giza. Yet, in the early 1970s, Lehner's efforts were being channeled into writing a book entitled *The Egyptian Legacy* (1974),² which would outline the archaeological and historical evidence for the existence of Cayce's vision of Egypt in the Ra-Ta period and, of course, its connections with the Sphinx, Great Pyramid, and lost Hall of Records.

During a successful two-year scholarship at the American University in Cairo (AUC), Lehner became part of the Egyptological community in Egypt. The hope was that he would act as a perfect liaison between its key figures and the A.R.E., which continued for several more years to support him as a "research fellow" at the AUC in the Department of Anthropology. This connection was deemed vital in allowing the Edgar Cayce Foundation to sponsor, both directly and indirectly, various intended research projects in Giza.

Some may raise their eyebrows at the nurturing of one of its own people to an influential position among the Egyptological community. However, it is important to remember that although the A.R.E. had always been prepared to finance scientific expeditions in Egypt, up until this time it had been extremely difficult for them to make the necessary contacts, as supporters did not want to risk their livelihoods by giving credence to the prophecies of Edgar Cayce, whether right or wrong.

Mark Lehner, affectionately referred to by Hugh Lynn Cayce and his associates as “the Scholar,” was the key to their success. However, although Lehner did begin to open new avenues of exploration for the A.R.E., his scholarship taught him much about the merits of ancient Egypt’s conventional chronology and evolution as well as the more obvious origins of the Giza pyramid field. This finally led him to disown, publicly at least, Cayce’s vision of Egypt’s Ra-Ta civilization, even though Lehner remains on good terms with the A.R.E..³

The SRI Expeditions

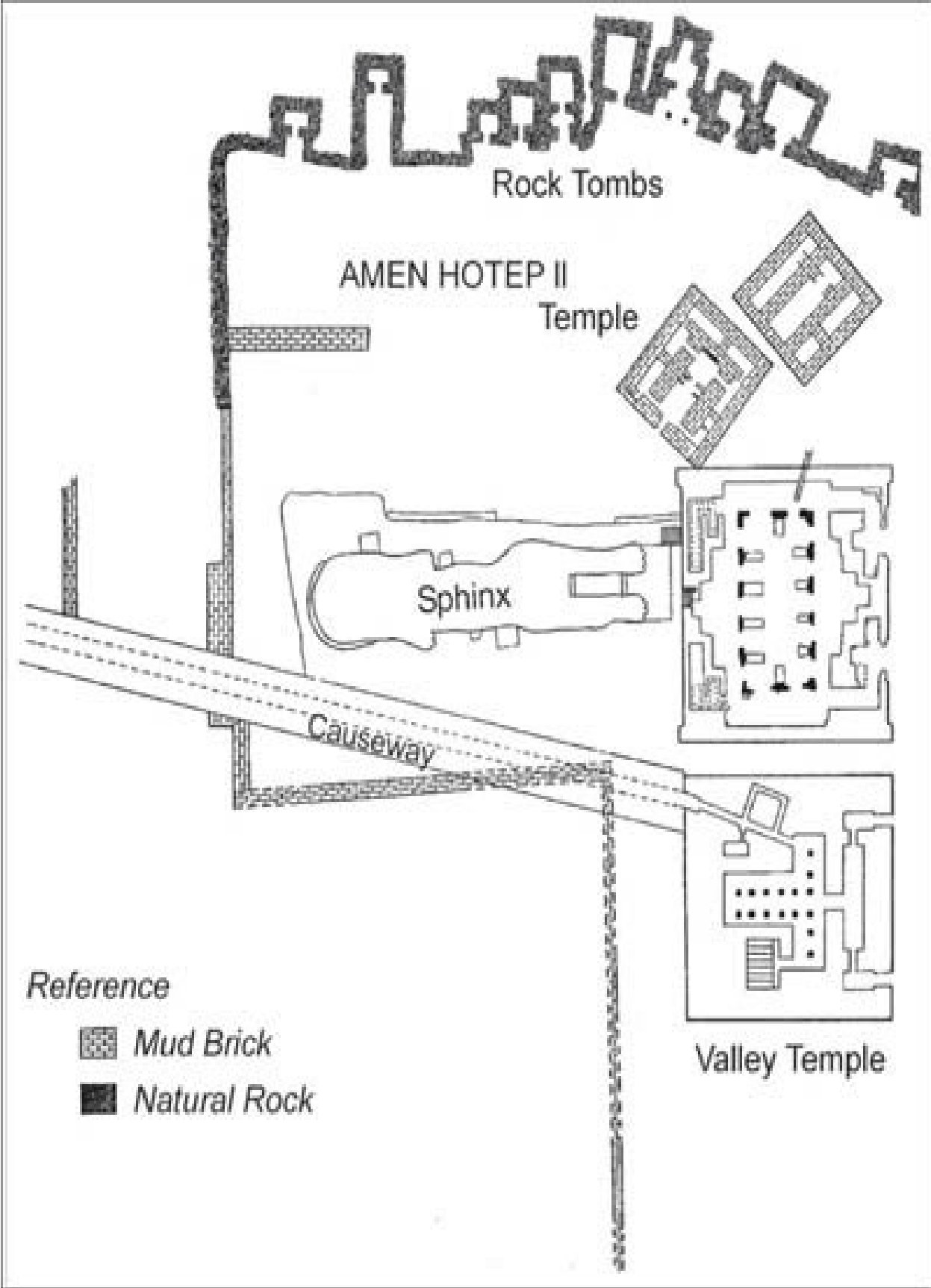
Independent of the ARE's own efforts to explore beneath the plateau in Giza was a joint venture in 1974 between Egypt's Ain Shams University and the Stanford Research Institute (SRI), sponsored by the National Science Foundation. Using hi-tech ground penetration radar equipment, they examined areas around the Great Pyramid and Sphinx monument with the express purpose of searching for underground anomalies that might lead to the discovery of "hidden chambers," in other words, the Hall of Records. Unfortunately, however, the porosity of the limestone bedrock made it virtually impossible to discern the difference between natural fissures and hewn chambers.

In 1977 the SRI, under the charge of NASA consultant Lambert T. Dolphin, was back in Egypt, this time with more advanced instrumentation and once again under the sponsorship of the National Science Foundation. Using electrical resistivity instruments in the vicinity of the Sphinx, which involved holes being bored into the bedrock of the Sphinx enclosure, Dolphin's team was successful in detecting no less than five anomalies, with the following details:

Behind the rear paws [northwest end] we ran two traverses. Both traverses indicate an anomaly that could possibly be due to a tunnel aligned northwest to southeast.

Another anomaly exists in the middle of the south side . . . [and there] are two anomalies in front of the front paws of the Sphinx . . . [one] suggesting a cavity or shaft as much as 10 meters [33 feet] deep. The cavity, if present, is probably filled with rubble.⁴

Whether Dolphin and his colleagues at the SRI simply traced the presence of natural fissures or something more important is now difficult to call. The northwest to southeast orientation of the two anomalies behind the Sphinx's rear paws hints at their being natural, since this is the alignment of the Moqattam Formation, the limestone bedrock on which the plateau sits. On the other hand, both these anomalies seem sufficiently close to the underground passage first shown to Baraize in 1926 for them to be connected in some way.



5. Plan of the Sphinx enclosure and temples (after Hassan). A number of underground cavities have been detected in the limestone bedrock beneath the monument, leading to speculation that they are hidden chambers.

Whatever the case, Hugh Lynn Cayce and his associates at the A.R.E. saw these new developments in Giza as encouraging in their search for the Hall of Records. Although the organization did not sponsor the SRI explorations in Giza directly, it is on record that in early 1977, prior to his return to Egypt, Lambert Dolphin traveled to the A.R.E. headquarters in Virginia Beach to secure funds for the upcoming expedition. The outcome of that meeting was that private individuals affiliated with the foundation stepped in to help finance the SRI's operations in Giza.⁵ At the same time, Mark Lehner was able to establish important contacts at the SRI and oversee the activities on the plateau itself. Indeed, Lehner encouraged the SRI to focus its attention on specific areas of the Sphinx enclosure.

This time, Dolphin proposed a much more thorough investigation of the Sphinx area, using even more sophisticated instrumentation. The research team also wanted to generate 3-D mapping of the subsurface and use what is known as borescopic photography in order to send a camera down into the underground anomalies already detected via drilled bore holes.

The A.R.E. sponsorship helped fund a complete remote-sensing survey of not only the Sphinx enclosure but also the Sphinx Temple, a ruinous building, constructed of gigantic limestone blocks, on the east side of the Sphinx monument. This took place over a period of three months in early 1978, with a number of new anomalies being detected. Yet, in every case, when explored with an endoscope, these subsurface hollows proved to be of natural origin. Dolphin held that other possible features might have existed deeper than those examined, but the dreaded water table made their detection virtually impossible.

Other techniques, such as “immersion acoustics,” which uses a transmitter that can be immersed in water at the bottom of a drilled hole, were then employed by the team to better define even deeper anomalies. This method produced further so-called shadow zones, or blind spots, which might well have been indications of hollows and cavities, including one of particular interest on the Sphinx’s south side. Yet, although these anomalies proved worthy of investigation, those that were explored by borescope came to nothing. As the project ran out of time, other shadow zones were left untouched, leading only to deep frustration and promises to resurrect the exploration work at some future date.

Giza Plateau Mapping Project

After this time, the Edgar Cayce Foundation used its resources to help fund other projects on the Giza plateau, including the Sphinx Mapping Project—initiated and directed on site by Mark Lehner on behalf of the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE)—founded to continue the work of American Egyptologist George A. Reisner. Its purpose was the systematic archaeological and architectural survey of the Sphinx, including photogrammetry for the purposes of creating detailed architectural drawings.

So successful was the venture that it helped launch an even more adventurous project under the directorship of Lehner and the ARCE. This was the Giza Plateau Mapping Project (GPMP), created in 1985 with the express purpose of accurately mapping the entire plateau under the auspices of a new research body called the Ancient Egypt Research Associates (AERA). It is affiliated with the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute, to which Mark Lehner is today visiting assistant professor of Egyptian archaeology. Since its first season of operation in 1986, AERA has been responsible for not only the mapping of the entire plateau but also the rediscovery of the workers village, or “lost city of the Pyramids,” located south of the present pyramid field.

Thus we can see that, from the humble beginnings of an American psychic achieving a self-induced sleep hypnosis and revealing information about a highly implausible scenario in Giza around the end of the last Ice Age, much of the highest-quality research and exploration here since the 1970s has been either inspired by Edgar Cayce or funded by the association set up to preserve his readings and further the work of its mentor.

Network of Tunnels

Even today, the effect of Edgar Cayce's readings are still a major motivation behind the search for hidden chambers in Giza. The most significant scientific expedition since the SRI explorations of the 1970s took place in February 2006 and was headed by Abbas Mohamed Abbas, of the National Research Institute of Astronomy and Geophysics, based in Helwan, Egypt. Using state-of-the-art GPR instrumentation not available in previous decades, the all-Egyptian team was able to penetrate deeper into the bedrock than any previous research project and, as a result, detected the presence of several shafts and cavities in the vicinity of the Great Pyramid, Second Pyramid, and Sphinx monument. Abbas speculated that these anomalies might be linked via a "net[work] of tunnels"⁶ which intercepted previously unexplored "precious tombs." He further noted that "the results of the survey support the possibility of the presence of undisclosed relics, of high value."⁷

What makes Abbas's work so different from that of others who came to Giza looking for hidden chambers is the depth at which he has identified anomalies, for he predicts that what he has found lies approximately forty to eighty feet (12 to 25 meters) beneath the surface. What is more, from the resulting image profiles included in his published report, it would appear that one section of tunnel has a width of at least ten to sixteen feet (3 to 5 meters). He concludes that "we can presume the existence of a momentous diversity of archaeological structures at the Pyramids plateau which remain, as yet, unexposed."⁸

Under a New Age Shadow

There seems little question that the intention of this project has been to uncover new sites of potential archaeological interest, but even here we can see that behind the academic gloss is yet another attempt to find and secure the entrance to Giza's lost underworld. Accompanying Abbas and his research team, and arguably even the driving force behind this expedition, was American civil engineer Bill Brown, who is a firm believer in the Hall of Records.⁹ Although coming from a New Age background, Brown has proved to be extremely influential in Egypt. He is now heading a high-profile search to uncover further hidden chambers in Giza, working alongside a Polish GPR research team. Brown and his colleagues are also working in Hawara in the El-Faiyum Oasis, where they have detected what they believe is the entrance to Egypt's fabled Labyrinth, a vast, lost, temple complex, much of it underground, alluded to in the writings of various classical writers.

The significance of Abbas's work in Giza is this: He has persuasively shown that the plateau is riddled with tunnel-like cavities, a fact that prompted revisionist writer Phillip Coppens, author of *The New Pyramid Age*, to conclude that its bedrock is full of holes like a Swiss cheese, adding:

It is therefore to be expected that elsewhere on the plateau, similar cavities, if not long tunnels, exist. This makes for intriguing possibilities, as some of these tunnels may have been used by the ancient Egyptians—or that other tunnels or caves may have been expanded, or new “halls”—such as the fabled Hall of Records—constructed.¹⁰

The sheer potential of Cayce's predictions regarding the existence and future discovery of the Egyptian Hall of Records is quite extraordinary. Whether there is any hard evidence that it really exists has almost become superfluous to the

quest to find it, since, for the New Age community, the Hall of Records resonates the essence of a lost golden age, which is there in Giza to be sought and experienced through personal initiation.

Coptic Arab Tales

Rumors concerning a subterranean realm existing beneath the bedrock in Giza have been around for an extremely long time. Following the Arab conquest of Egypt in the seventh century, Arab travelers and historians learned of stories regarding a hidden world existing below the plateau from Egypt's Coptic Christian communities, who were regarded as the inheritors of pharaonic Egypt's ancient wisdom. For example, the Cairo-born historian Taki-ed-din Ahmad al-Makrizi (1360-1442), on the authority of one Ustod Ibrahim ben Wasyff Shah, wrote that prior to a cataclysm involving a flood and a conflagration—in which “fire was to proceed from the sign [of] Leo, and to consume the world”¹¹—“subterraneous passages” were constructed in the vicinity of the Pyramids as “depositories” of the “wisdom and acquirements in the different arts and sciences.”¹²

Not much more is said about them by al-Makrizi, although he does record that these passages existed before the construction of the Pyramids and were located some forty cubits (approximately 60 feet, or 18 meters) beneath the surface of the plateau.¹³ From this description it appears that he was alluding to underground structures of the sort detected beneath the bedrock in Giza by Dr. Abbas Mohamed Abbas in 2006.

Winding Passages Called Syringes

Even further back in history, the fourth-century Greco-Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus (fl. AD 360-390), who traveled extensively in Egypt and wrote concerning the Pyramids, had this to say about Giza's chthonic (underground) realm:

There are also [in the same vicinity as the Pyramids] subterranean fissures and winding passages called syringes, which, it is said, those acquainted with the ancient rites, since they had fore-knowledge that a deluge was coming, and feared that the memory of the ceremonies might be destroyed, dug in the earth in many places with great labor . . .¹⁴

Did a deep, underground structure of the sort described by Edgar Cayce in his readings exist inside a network of natural "fissures and winding passages" somewhere beneath the plateau? If so, then what did it represent?

Until now, all these questions have remained unanswered. Despite constant rumors of a labyrinthine world lurking beneath the Pyramids, no evidence has ever been produced to confirm that it really existed. As we shall see, the "Catacombs" discovered by Salt and Caviglia in the early 1800s form just the beginning of a sensational story that culminates in their investigation after nearly two hundred years of obscurity. Yet, more than this, we piece together exactly what it is that awaits discovery beneath the sands of Egypt and show that it had its beginnings even before the rise of the first pharaoh, approximately five thousand years ago.



Part

Two

Descent

From the Underworld

The existence of a labyrinthine world beneath Giza might well have determined its ancient name. This is Rostau (also written Rosetaw, Rosetau, Re-stew, and even Ro-Setaou), which means the “mouth of the passages”¹ or, alternatively, the “entrance to the winding passages.”² At first glance, this curious appellation might be taken to refer simply to the entrances to the hundreds of tombs that litter the plateau. However, Rostau has a far deeper meaning, for it is also the name given to the deepest part of ancient Egypt’s legendary chthonic realm known as the Duat.

The Duat, a word usually translated as “underworld” or “netherworld,” came to be seen as a series of cavernous passages devoid of light and direction that the soul of the deceased—originally, only the king and royal family, but later the priests, nobles and, finally, private individuals—had to navigate in order to reach the hereafter. It was inhabited by monstrous snakes, foul demons, and strange creatures, and riddled with fiery pits and sealed doors, or gates, each of which had to be approached with the correct spells and answers to questions posed by guardians—otherwise, the ba, or soul, would be lost forever.

Death of the Sun

From the Old Kingdom onward, the Duat became synonymous with the nocturnal journey of the sun in its role as a visible manifestation of the sun god Re. This was believed to pass beneath, or through, the earth from sunset to sunrise, something it did in the company of the stars that had set below the horizon.

The soul, or spirit, having been identified with the sun god, was seen to enter the duat underworld via a cavelike entrance in the west guarded by a recumbent lion known as the Aker. Assuming the form of a ram-headed, mummiform figure, standing within a shrinelike cabin on a “night barque,” the deceased would then be towed through the Duat, sometimes on firm ground and at other times on water. Like the entrance, the exit was often thought to be guarded by an Aker (the two lions were generally shown as a single animal with a lion’s head and forelegs at each end). At this time the revitalized spirit, as the sun reborn, would transfer to a “day barque” and take up its journey through the daylight hours.

In so-called funerary, or underworld, texts found inscribed on sarcophagi, tomb walls, and funerary papyri during the New Kingdom, a recurring theme is that the Duat was divided into twelve compartments, or houses, each representing a separate “hour” of the night. For instance, it is a concept expressed in the *Shat-ent-am-duat*, or *Am-duat* (“Book of that which is in the Duat,” also called the “Book of the Secret Chamber”), arguably the most important of the funerary texts used during this period. Such ideas were probably based on a belief that the night, however long, was separated into twelve divisions of equal length.

The Land of Sokar

Although the duat underworld was a mythological concept important to the funerary beliefs and customs of the ancient Egyptians, there is firm evidence that it was thought to have a physical counterpart in Giza. This was the belief of Egyptian-born Egyptologist Selim Hassan (1893-1961), who for ten years was director of excavations on the plateau on behalf of the Egyptian University, Cairo, and later the Service des Antiquités de l’Egypte. The results of his fieldwork were published as a multivolume work entitled *Excavations at Giza*. In one volume, which examines the concept of the duat underworld in some detail, he concludes that a physical counterpart of this underground realm must have existed in Giza.³

Hassan was drawn to make this startling conclusion after consulting the *Am-duat* text, in particular its description of the Fourth and Fifth Hours of the Night, which he felt differed in style and content from all the others.⁴ In these two divisions the Duat is named specifically as the “kingdom,” “land,” or “house” of Sokar in Rostau, which, as we saw, was the ancient name for the Giza plateau.⁵ As protector of this chthonic realm, Sokar, a falcon-headed god, was seen to personify the total darkness that engulfs, or embraces, the soul in death, especially in the context of the tomb or sarcophagus.⁶

The Astral Journey Downriver

That Giza should in some way be represented in the Am-duat text makes perfect sense, for if the description of the deceased's passage through the Duat is read, it is quickly realized that it is simply a dark mirror reflection of a river journey down the Nile, starting from Thebes, the capital of Upper Egypt in the south. Here was the great New Kingdom necropolis that included the Valley of the Kings, where many of the versions of the Am-duat we have today were recorded on the walls of royal tombs, hence the Duat of Thebes being the point of commencement of the journey. The otherworldly entourage then passed through the Duat of Abydos, the site of an ancient royal necropolis dating back to Predynastic times, before approaching Memphis, the capital of Lower Egypt. Here the funerary barque and its spectral occupants came upon "the road of the secret things of Re-stau [i.e., Rostau]," marking the start of the Fourth Hour of the Night, called the "Hidden Circle of Ament," Ament meaning the "Hidden Place."⁷

As in the case of the Duats of Thebes and Abydos, the Fourth Hour was a dark mirror counterpart of a familiar cult center, in this case, Rostau, the ancient necropolis and pyramid field we know today as Giza. Pictorial representations of the Am-duat's Fourth Hour show a series of alternating sloping and horizontal corridors, which some have seen as possessing an uncanny resemblance to the interior passages of the Great Pyramid.⁸

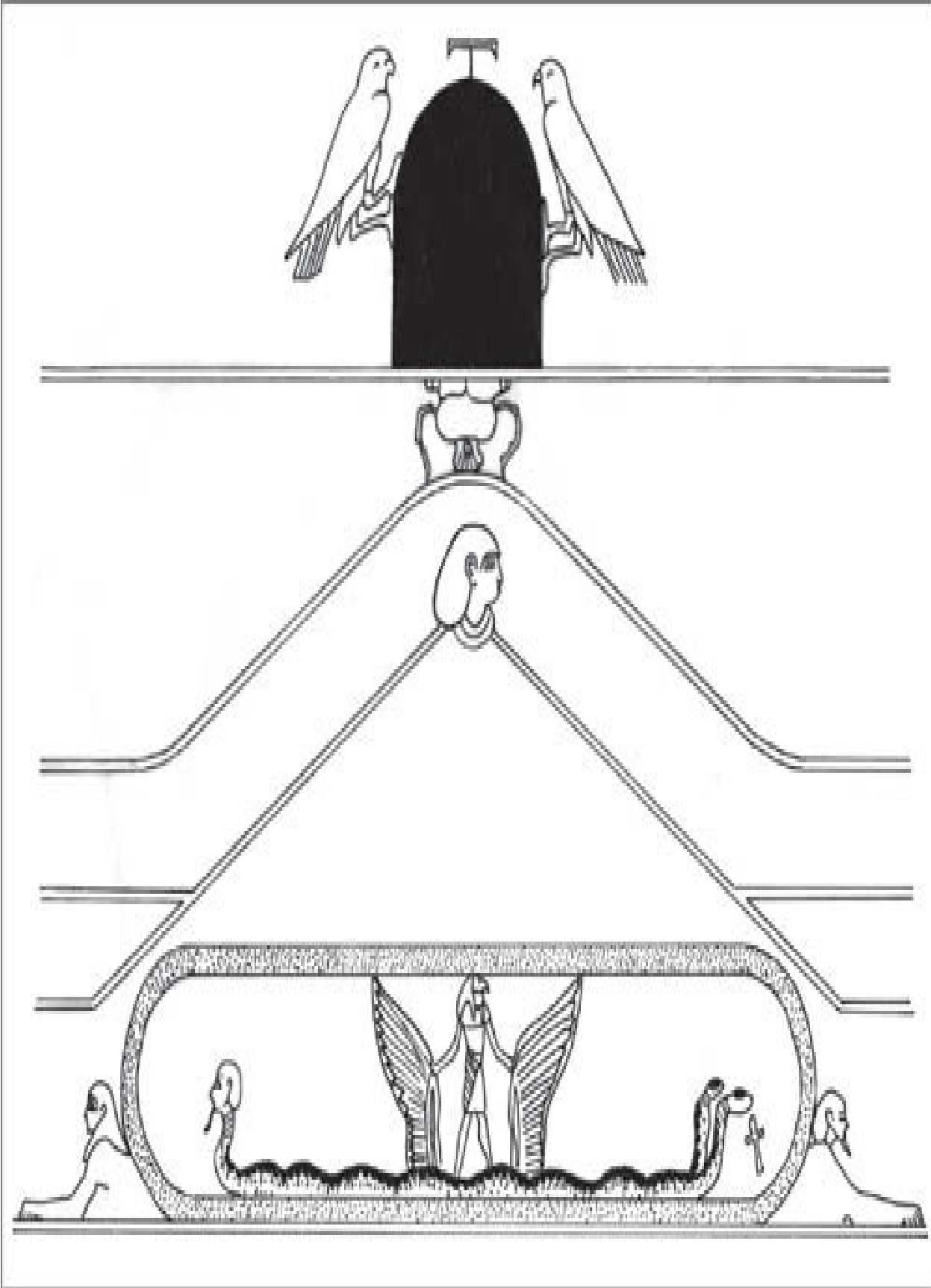
Here, in the Duat of Memphis, the deceased entered the Fifth Hour, which marked the approach to the midnight hour as well as the darkest and deepest part of the Duat as a whole. It was the domain of Sokar proper, represented by an oval-shaped island in the waters of the Duat. This is described below. Afterward, the Am-duat describes how the night barque continued its journey onto the Duat of Heliopolis, the ancient cult center of the sun god (see chapter five), before entering the Nile Delta, and navigating an astral counterpart of one of its tributaries. In the Eleventh Hour, the deceased, after passing through the Duat of

Sais (the ancient cult center of the goddess Neith), emerged finally from the subterranean darkness. Then, in the Twelfth Hour, conceived as existing on Egypt's easternmost border, the Am-duat tells us that the soul of the deceased separated from its mummiform body, addressed as Osiris, god of the underworld, in order that it might rise into the sky as the sun god reborn.⁹

The Center of the World

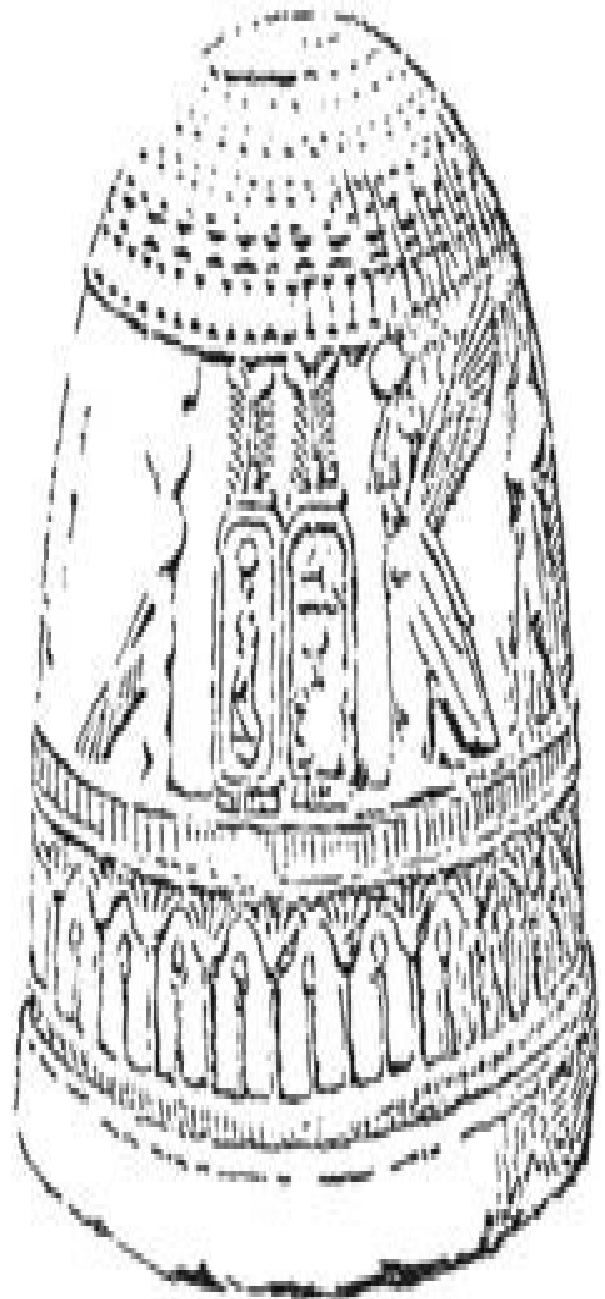
The Am-duat's Fifth Hour—which, as the second part of the Duat of Memphis, bore the name Rostau—is represented in pictorial form by a set of highly symbolic drawings, shown together in three different registers (i.e., lines of text and pictures). The highest register shows a bell-shaped object, often colored orange, on which perch two birds, very possibly kites (see figure 6). This strange form almost certainly signifies an omphalos (a Greek word meaning “navel”), usually represented by a large, round-topped stone of the sort once found at the cult center of Delphi in Greece and said to have marked the center of the world. This power object was located originally in a cavelike inner sanctum within the temple of the god Apollo.

The use of the word omphalos (omphali, in plural) for these stones derives from the fact that the navel is the point of nourishment within the womb for the fetus. Thus the first physical matter to be created was conceived as having emerged via some kind of invisible umbilical cord linked to an otherworldly source. This is reflected in the place-name Delphi, which comes from the Greek delphos (), meaning “womb,” an allusion to omphali as the point of creation of the earth or the universe or both. Carved figures of a pair of birds were placed on the Delphic omphalos, after the sky god Zeus is said to have sent eagles out to the ends of the earth to find its center point, which turned out to be Delphi. The birds seen on top of the bell-shaped object in the Am-duat text might also have functioned in a similar role.¹⁰

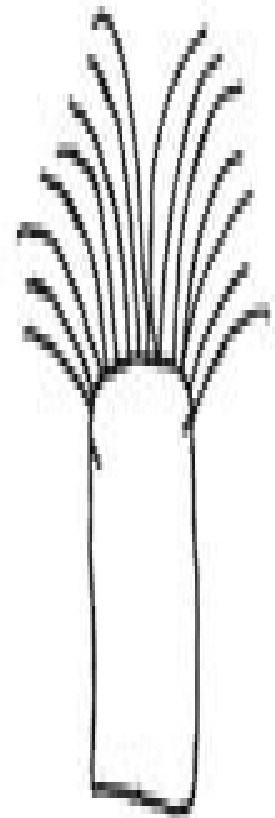
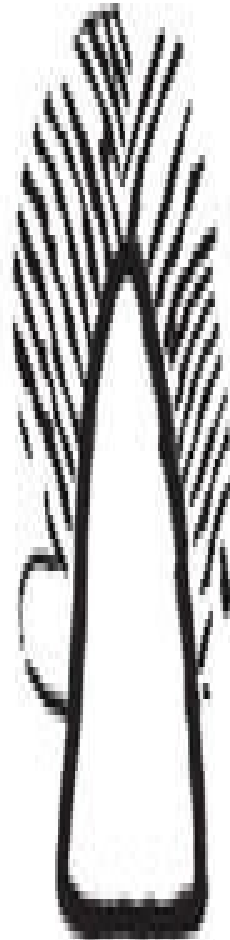
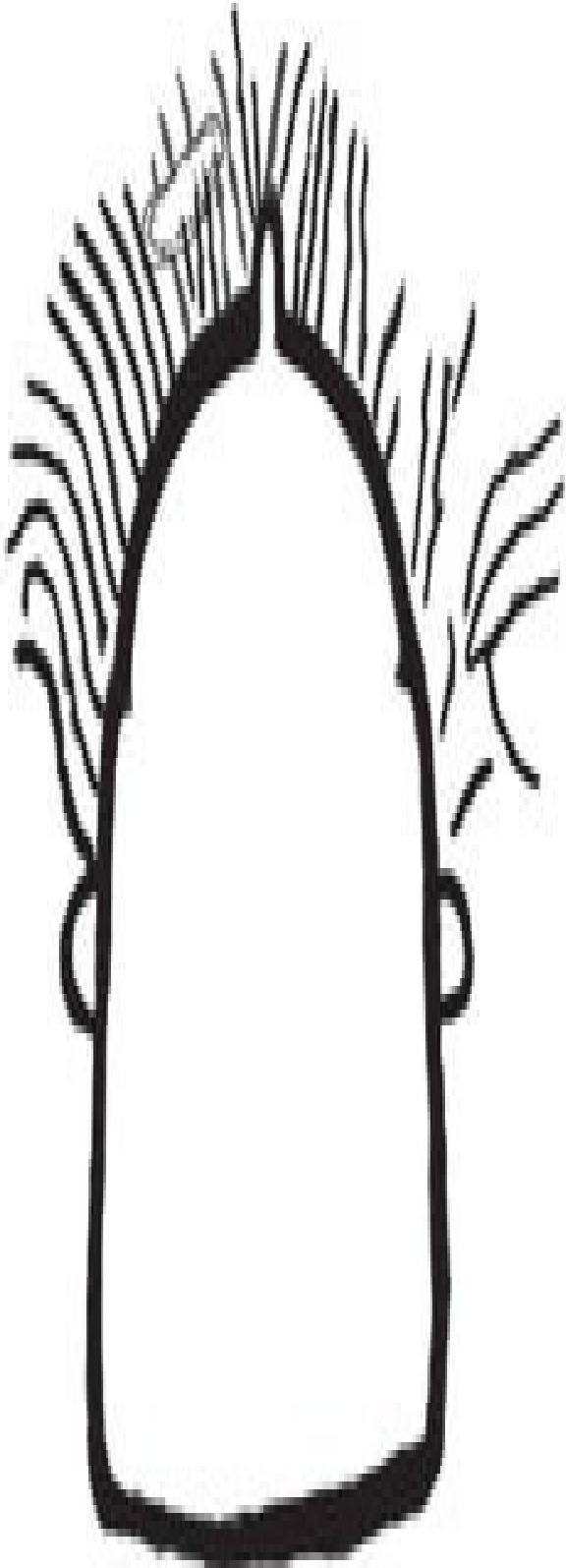


6. The Fifth Hour of the duat as illustrated in the ancient Egyptian funerary text known as the Am-duat. Note how the principal objects of the three registers—the bell, pyramid mound, and oval island—are synchronized one above the other.

Other omphali existed in the Greek Hellenic world, since there were rival claimants for being the “navel,” or center, of the earth. Some were even to be found in Greco-Egyptian temples, such as those of the god Amun (seen as a form of the god Zeus) in Siwah, Napata, and Thebes (Karnak).¹¹ All these stones are thought to have been kept in dark inner sanctums. Moreover, very similar bell-shaped objects have been identified among carved art on megalithic (great stone) monuments in Western Europe, dating from the Neolithic era, c. 4500-3500 BC. These round-topped forms, some with nipplelike protrusions on top, are, like the Greek omphali, thought to represent the navel of a primeval goddess of death and regeneration (see figures 7, 8 and 9).¹²



7. and 8. Left, one of two stone representations of the original omphalos, or center of the world, to be seen at Delphi in Greece; and right, the carved omphalos discovered at the site of the great temple of Amun at Napata in northern Sudan by American Egyptologist George A. Reisner.



9. Carved images from Neolithic chambered tombs in Western Europe, showing what Lithuanian prehistorian Marija Gimbutas proposed were abstract representations of a navel belonging to a prehistoric goddess of death and regeneration (after Gimbutas).

Horizon of the Hidden Country

Two registers below the bell-shaped object in depictions of the fifth Hour is a scene showing Sokar standing on the back of an enormous, two-headed winged serpent with a tail terminating in a bearded, human head. Sokar appears to hold open its wings, which might echo his appellation of “great god with his two wings opened,” showing perhaps that the snake is in some manner an avatar of Sokar.¹³ Both Sokar and the serpent are positioned on “an oval island in the river” of the Duat of Memphis.¹⁴

In ancient Egyptian tradition it was believed that the first solid matter in the universe came into being as an island or mound resembling a conical, egglike form, which emerged from the primeval waters of chaos known as the Nun. It was a symbolic process reflected in the manner that each year around midsummer the Nile Valley would be flooded by ice-melt waters coming down from the mountains of equatorial Africa. This so-called inundation was seen as a divine act that annually regenerated the flood plains. When, after a period of about three months, the inundation finally receded, it would leave behind small islands of thick, black sludge that immediately teemed with new life (hence the name by which the ancient Egyptians called their kingdom—Khem (km), or Khemet (kmt), meaning the “Black Land”).

The island of the Duat, which very likely represents the island of first creation, is supported on the back of a double-headed lion, a form of the Aker lion. The identity of this hidden realm is given as the “Land of Sekri,” a variation of the name Sokar, which is described as the “horizon of the hidden country of Sekri, which guardeth the hidden body (or, flesh).”¹⁵

Curiously, the text accompanying this scene tells us that the soul of the deceased as the sun god is denied access to Sokar’s secret chamber, an allusion not just to

the oval island but also to a pyramid-like hill or mound directly above it in the middle of the three registers. This structure, which terminates in a female head identified as that of the goddess Isis (the sister-wife of Osiris, Lord of the Underworld), reaches up toward a downward-facing beetle that is emerging from the base of the aforementioned bell-shaped object in the uppermost register. The beetle is the god Khepri, who symbolizes the embryonic sun that achieves new life as it approaches the midnight hour, a process reflected in the rebirth of the soul prior to sunrise.

All three images—the mound, island, and bell-shaped object—were therefore symbols of first creation, signifying the place believed by the ancient Egyptians to mark the very spot where this creation process began. Since they appear, one above the other, in the Fifth Hour of the Am-duat text, which bears the name Rostau, does this suggest that Giza was seen as a place of first creation, that is, the point where the physical world came into being? If so, then was Sokar's secret chamber, contained within the duat underworld and shown beneath the primeval mound, also representative of first creation? It is a matter we shall return to in chapter five.

Dr. Mark Lehner has written about the nature of Sokar's "sealed chamber" in his essential work *The Complete Pyramids* (1997). Here he proposes that the oval island (which he describes as an "ellipse") is actually an "egg"—another universal symbol of creation—which is awakened, or brought to life, as the sun god passes overhead the pyramid mound.¹⁶ This then becomes the moment of regeneration that enables the sun to be born anew when it exits the Duat at dawn the next morning. Lehner writes that all three images shown in the Fifth Hour—the island, mound, and bell—are subterranean, in that they exist in the duat underworld. This might have been the case in the Am-duat text. Yet I will provide evidence in subsequent chapters to suggest that the pyramid mound and oval island were originally physical locations synonymous with each other, within which was the bell-shaped omphalos.

To support the idea that a physical representation of the Kingdom of Sokar—or

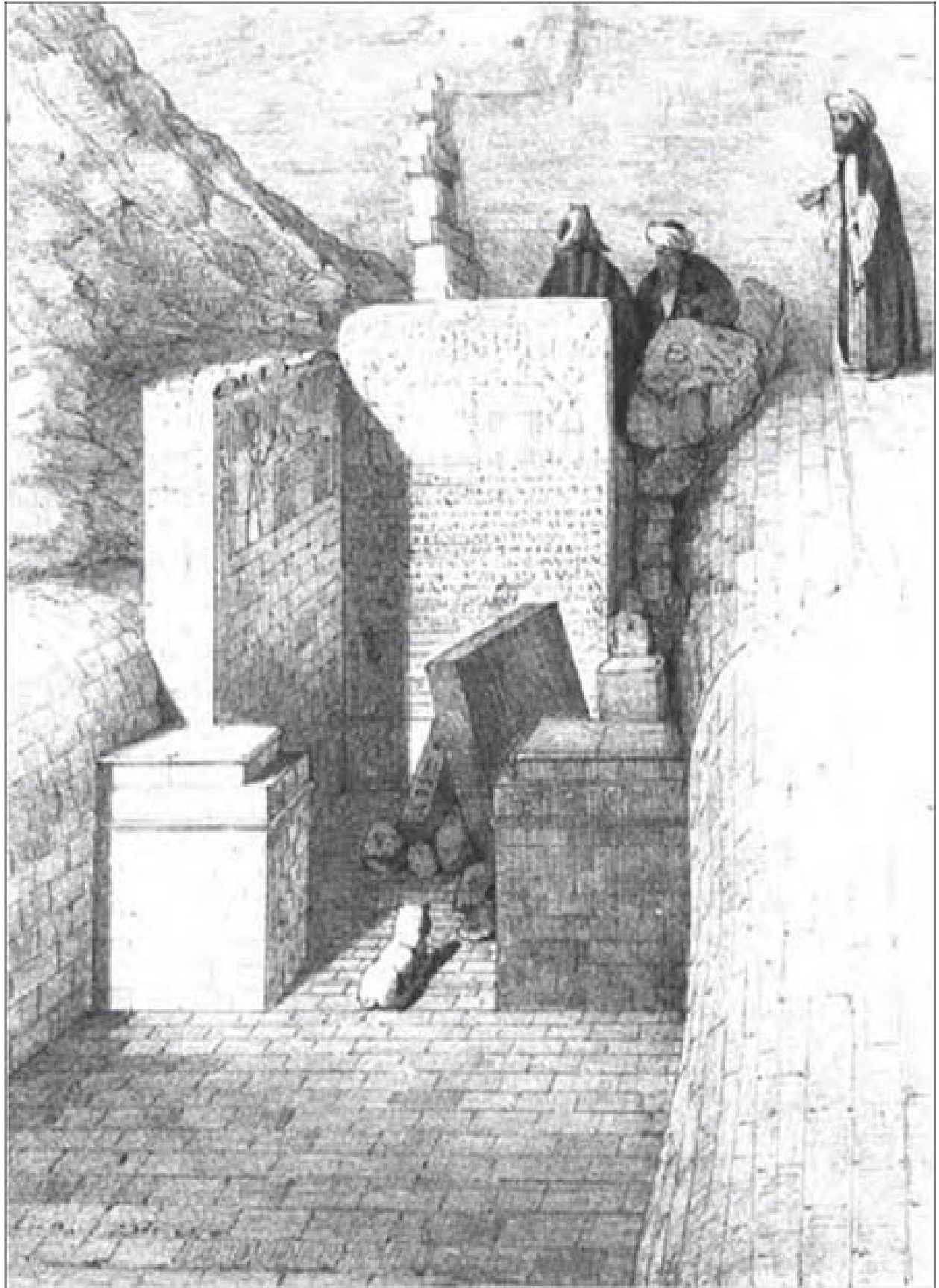
more specifically, the Fourth Hour and Fifth Hour of the Duat—awaits discovery in Giza, Selim Hassan drew attention to the similarity between the double-headed lion, supporting the oval island, and the Great Sphinx, situated at the eastern edge of the plateau.¹⁷ We might also note, as others have done, the uncanny resemblance between the perspective of the pyramid-like mound and twin-headed lion in the Fifth Hour, and the sight of the Great Pyramid and Sphinx monument when viewed together from the southeast.¹⁸ Not that this means that the Great Pyramid was the pyramid mound of the Fifth Hour, only that Rostau's identification with the Giza pyramid field might have influenced the placement of the images featured in the Am-duat's Fifth Hour.

All of this adds strength to the idea suggested in the Edgar Cayce readings that the Sphinx monument acts as a physical guardian protecting the entrance or exit to some kind of chthonic realm in Giza. If this is so, was Cayce's concept of the Hall of Records synonymous with at least some part of the duat underworld, in particular Sokar's secret, or sealed, chamber to which even the sun god was denied access? It is these matters that we must address next to better understand what really awaits discovery beneath the bedrock of Giza.

God's Tomb

Could Giza's identification with Rostau and the mythological Kingdom of Sokar echo the existence beneath its famous plateau of a subterranean world of the sort explored by Salt and Caviglia in 1817? As we shall see, it is a supposition strengthened in the knowledge that Sokar was Giza's protective deity from a very early period of history. More significantly, an important shrine or sanctuary commemorating the presence nearby of Sokar's secret chamber is known to have existed very close to the plateau.¹

The first piece of evidence comes from a large, round-topped, granite slab known as a stela (stelae, in plural), erected between the paws of the Sphinx during the reign (c. 1413-1405 BC) of the pharaoh Thutmose IV and still in its original position today. Its inscription commemorates the fact that one day, the young prince, while on a hunting expedition, took rest from the noonday sun beneath the shadow cast by the head of the Sphinx. Having fallen asleep, the young prince dreamt that Horemakhet (meaning "Horus in the Horizon"; in Greek, Harmachis)—the genius loci, or "guardian spirit," of the recumbent lion—appeared to him and said that if he were to clear away the sand that choked the monument, then his ascension to the throne would be guaranteed. So this was indeed what Thutmose did, and sure enough, so the Dream Stela (a.k.a. the Sphinx Stela) tells us, the prince went on to reign over Egypt.



10. The famous Dream Stela found in 1817 by Italian explorer Giovanni Caviglia against the breast of the Sphinx, after Henry Salt. Its text alludes to the monument lying “beside Sokar in Rosta(u).”

Yet it is not the main part of the text that is of interest to us but lines praising the Sphinx as Horemakhet, for here we find mention of the recumbent lion lying “beside Sokar in Rosta[u],”² an apparent reference to a nearby shrine or sanctuary honoring the falcon-headed god, and called elsewhere the Shetayet — literally, the “Tomb of God.”³ The earliest evidence of this extraordinary mystery comes from an inscribed basalt slab in the British Museum known as the Shabaka Stone.

The Shabaka Stone

Labeled blandly as Item #498, the stone was donated to the museum by George John, 2nd Earl Spencer, in 1805. Its inscription, although only dating to the reign of the pharaoh Shabaka, c. 716-695 BC, derives from an earlier text assigned to the Old Kingdom period. It contains what is referred to as the Memphite Theology, an account (or “cosmogony”) of the gods venerated in Memphis, the capital of Upper and Lower Egypt during the Pyramid Age. The Giza plateau formed part of the vast necropolis attached to Memphis, located ten miles (17 km) to the southeast, even though the construction of the various pyramid fields it contained were heavily influenced by the beliefs and practices of the Re priesthood, whose famous cult center was Iunu—the Heliopolis (“city of the sun”) of the Greeks and the city of On of the Old Testament (book of Genesis 41:45). Nothing but a single granite obelisk remains of this former great center for the worship of the ‘sun god and his pantheon, which is today merely a busy suburb of modern-day Cairo, some fifteen miles (24 km) northeast of Giza.

The Shabaka Stone alludes also to the myth of Osiris, one of the gods championed by the Heliopolitan priesthood, and how his scheming brother, Set, the god of chaos and disorder, tricked Osiris into a custom-made coffin, which was immediately sealed and thrown into the Nile, where he drowned. This place of drowning is given as Ayan (modern Tura), which lies just to the northeast of Memphis, and is referred to in the Shabaka Stone as the “Division-of-the-Two-Lands,” since it marked the line of demarcation between Upper and Lower Egypt. In distance, Ayan is about five miles (8 kms) south of the Giza pyramid field. The stone goes on to reveal that this area is also

. . . the land [of] the burial of Osiris in the House of Sokar. [Arrived] Isis and Nephtys [Set’s sister-wife] without delay, for Osiris has drowned in his water. Isis looked out, beheld Osiris and attended to him. Horus speaks to Isis and Nephtys: “Hurry, grasp him [from the water] . . .” Isis and Nephtys speak to Osiris: “We come, we take you [to the place of interment]. They heeded in time,

and brought him to [land]. He entered the hidden portals . . . [Thus Osiris came into] the earth . . . to the north of [the land to which he had come . . .]⁴

This small section of the hieroglyphic text makes it clear that Osiris, the god with whom the pharaoh was identified in death, was believed to have drowned in the Nile, somewhere north of Memphis, the demarcation point between Upper and Lower Egypt. Afterward, his body had been retrieved from the water by Isis and Nephtys and taken for burial in the “House of Sokar.” Here the Lord of the Underworld had entered the “hidden portals,” an apparent allusion to Rostau, that is, Giza.

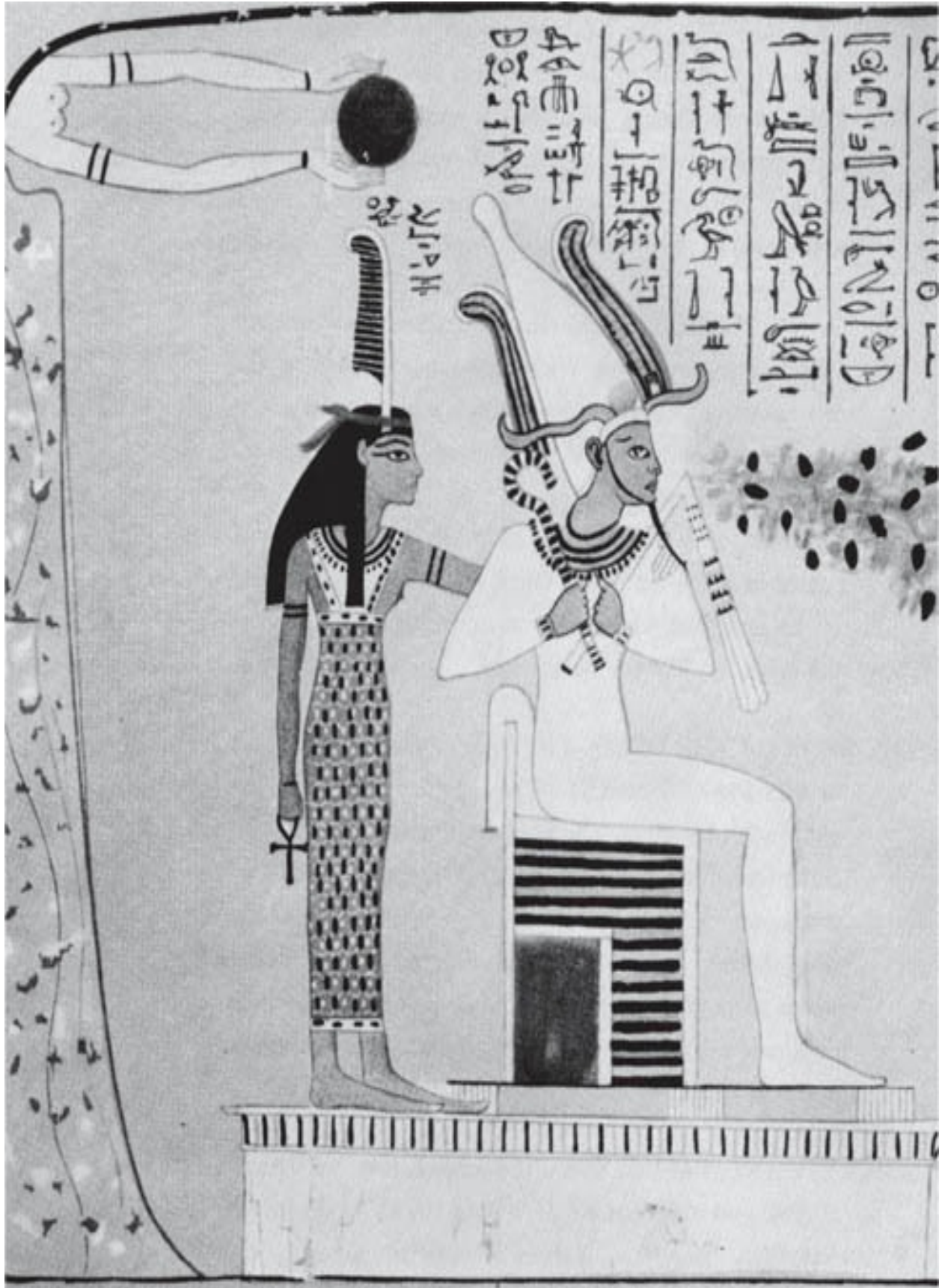
Confirmation that Osiris’s body ended its days in Rostau is found in a funerary text entitled the “Book of Two Ways,” which dates to Egypt’s Middle Kingdom, c. 2134-1786 BC. Here we find mention of a mythical location called the “highland of Aker,” said to be the dwelling place of Osiris.⁵ On this matter Egyptologist Selim Hassan wrote in 1936: “This may be a reference to the sandy Libyan plateau where is the earthly Reste.w,” that is, Rostau, or Giza.⁶

The Osiris Conundrum

If the original text of the Shabaka Stone does date to the Pyramid Age, as many scholars suspect, then a belief that Osiris's body was laid to rest in the House of Sokar (also called the Shetayet, or secret chamber) must have been known to those who constructed the Great Pyramid and its neighbors. In other words, it was believed even by the age of Khufu and his successors that Osiris's tomb was present somewhere in the vicinity of the plateau.

There is, however, a huge problem in this respect. No known reference to Osiris exists prior to the first appearance of the so-called Pyramid Texts, found inscribed on the interior walls of royal pyramids toward the end of the Old Kingdom. These constitute a whole corpus of spells, hymns, and litanies that were meant as instructions for the soul of the deceased, in its guise as Osiris. Although the Pyramid Texts were originally found only in royal pyramids—the oldest being that of Unas, a pharaoh who ruled at the end of the Fifth Dynasty, c. 2350 BC—by the time of the Middle Kingdom, they had started to appear in the tombs of priests, nobles, and private individuals. Eventually, however, the Pyramid Texts were replaced by another corpus of funerary literature known as the Coffin Texts, which we shall encounter shortly.

Osiris's meteoric rise to fame as ancient Egypt's chief god of the underworld came only after the Heliopolitan priesthood gained the royal seal of approval for the propagation and dissemination of religion, toward the end of the Fourth Dynasty. Heliopolis, which lay within sight of the Giza pyramid field, was home not only to the cult of Re but also to an "Ennead" of nine gods, in the form of Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nuit, Osiris, Set, Isis, and Nephtys. As the Heliopolitan priesthood grew in power and influence, the more its gods were elevated to positions of importance in ancient Egyptian myth and legend.



11. The god Osiris shown seated in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, with Ma'at, cosmic order, standing behind him in the form of a goddess. From the "Papyrus of Ani" in the British Museum.

The Heliopolitan priesthood was responsible also for absorbing the myths of key gods not forming part of its pantheon. One prime example of this is Khentamenti, a jackal god that presided over the ancient royal necropolis in Abydos, in southern Egypt. With the rise in power of the Heliopolitan priesthood during the Old Kingdom, his cult was absorbed into that of Osiris in his role as Lord of the Underworld.

The Assimilation of Sokar

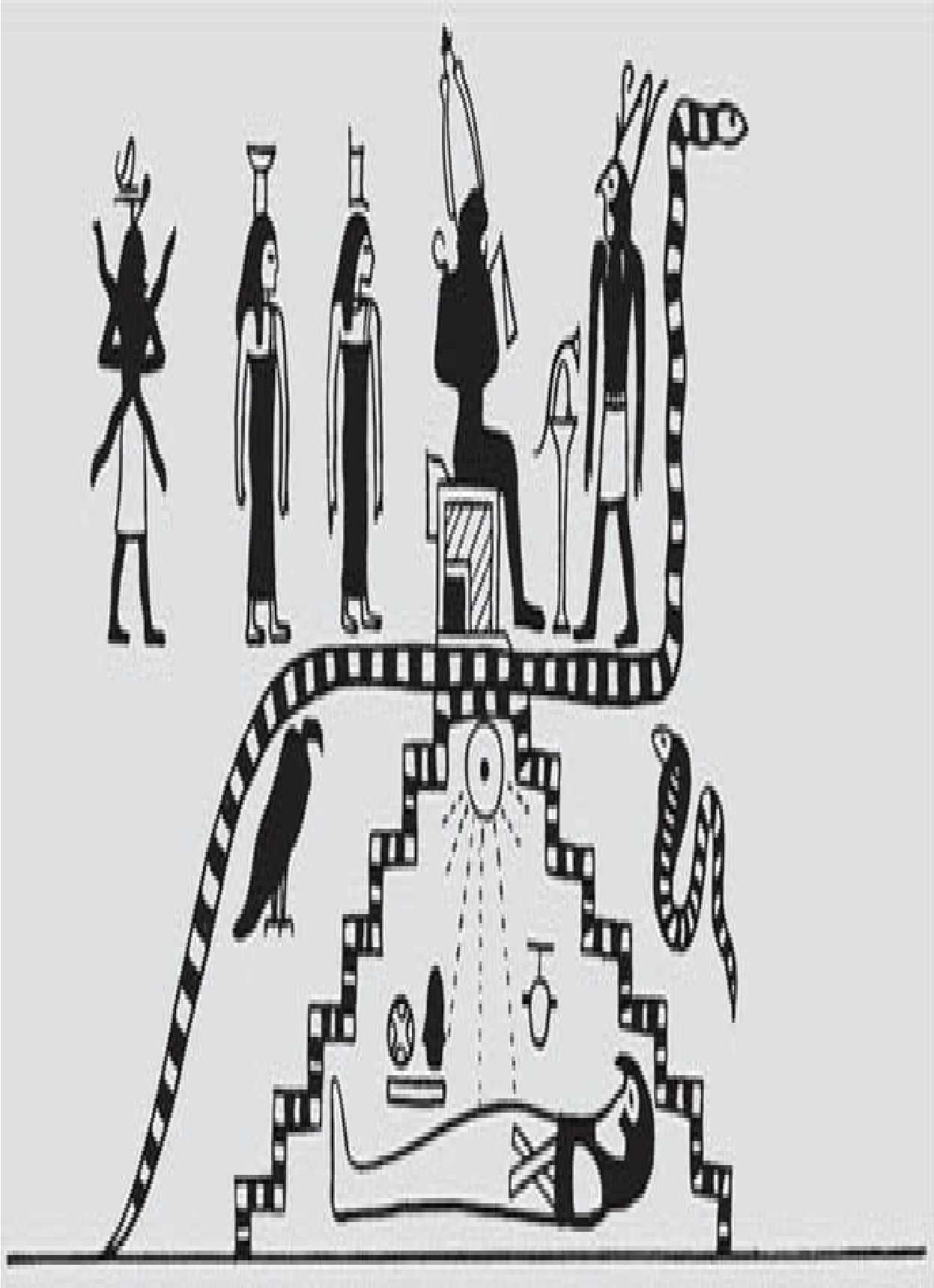
Another deity who suffered a similar fate was Sokar, who was arguably one of the country's most ancient funerary gods and presided over the entire Memphite necropolis. The Heliopolitan priesthood attempted to assimilate Sokar's cult into that of Osiris, creating a hybrid god called Sokar-Osiris, even making Osiris "Lord of Rostau."⁷ At the same time, the Heliopolitan priesthood stripped Sokar of his extremely ancient status as a god of the dead and transformed the Shetayet, the House of Sokar, into the tomb of Osiris, honoring its own lord of the underworld.

The Secret of the Duat

Thus it becomes clear that whatever awaits discovery beneath the sands of Giza cannot simply be the last resting place of Osiris, even if this is what it became. This we can assume with some certainty, for there is firm evidence that Osiris's tomb was thought to have existed within the island or mound of first creation, like those seen in the Fifth Hour of the Am-duat text.⁸ It was this surmise that led to the construction of symbolic tombs of Osiris, which featured a raised island surrounded by the primeval waters of Nun. They included the Osirieon, or cenotaph (a symbolic tomb or shrine), attached to the temple of Seti I, who reigned c. 1308-1291 BC, in Abydos, and perhaps the Osiris Shaft in Giza. Both have elevated platforms surrounded by water that rises up from below.

Further confirmation that the burial place of Osiris was synonymous with the island or mound of first creation comes from the temple of Philae in southern Egypt. Here it records that the "Sanctified Territory which Ptah founded [i.e., Memphis], and which men call the Beginning of the Earth, was at the same time a burial place in which Osiris was believed to rest."⁹ (Emphasis in the original.)

Thus it becomes clear that the ancient Egyptian island or mound of creation was synonymous with the tomb of Osiris, which had originally been the domain of Sokar as both guardian and internee of the Shetayet. If correct, then we can safely conclude that all these locations were one and the same and that their prototype, symbolizing the place of first creation, existed somewhere in the vicinity of Rostau—that is, the Giza pyramid field. Yet if this was so, then what exactly was the Shetayet, and what did it contain?



12. The falcon-headed god Sokar-Osiris as a mummy inside the island or mound of creation, which acts as his final resting place. In ancient Egyptian tradition Osiris's tomb, and thus the island of creation, was located in the vicinity of Giza.

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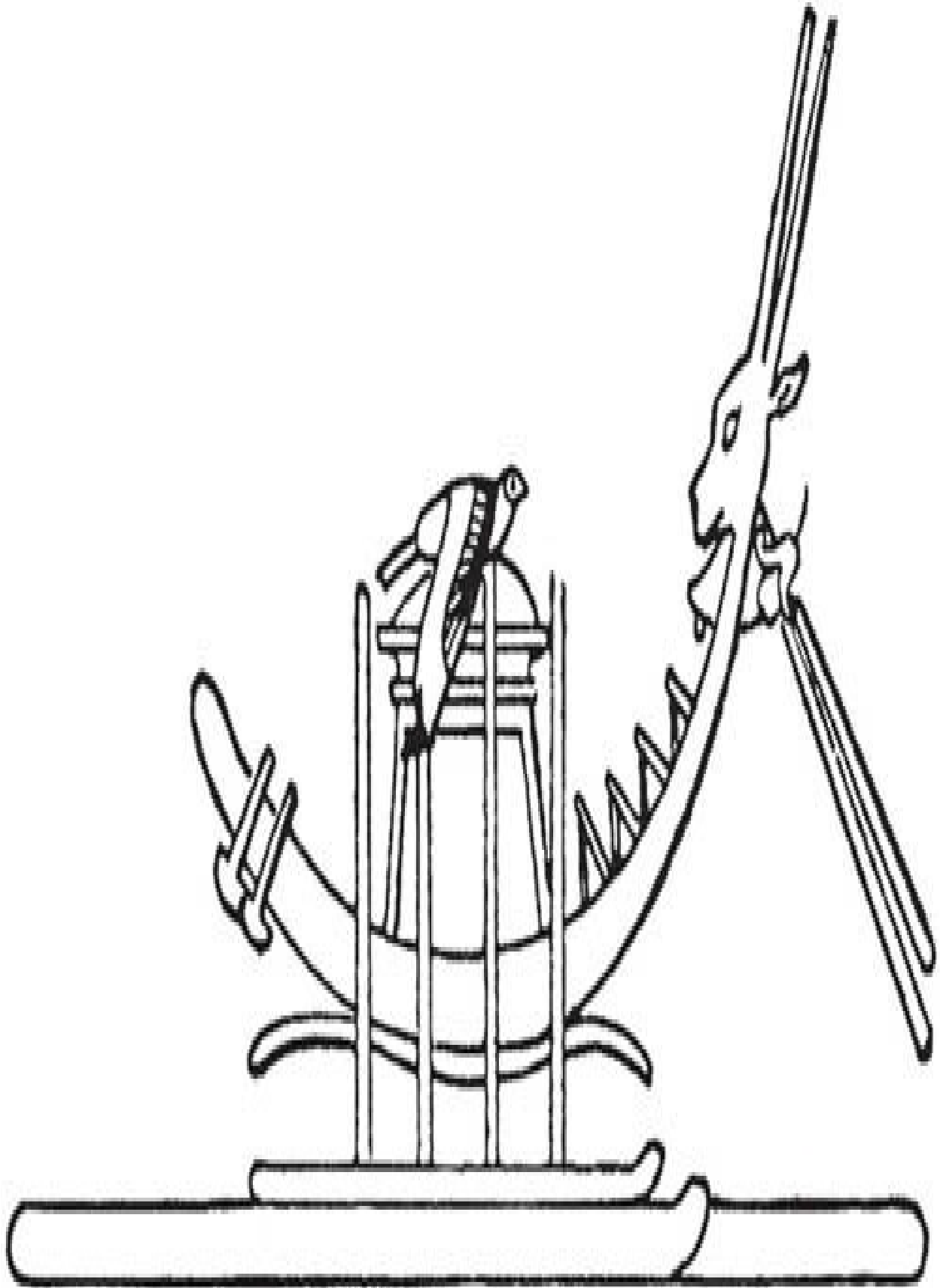
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The Hunt for the Shetayet Shrine

Throughout dynastic history, an important festival of Sokar took place in Memphis (and later in other places in Egypt) across a ten-day period. It involved individuals, and arguably even the pharaoh himself, dragging around the model of a wooden boat called the henu barque, the god's personal vessel, recalling the night barque on which the deceased is towed along inside the duat underworld.

On the barque's deck was a "chapel," or "cabinet," with a conical roof on which was mounted the head of a falcon, a symbol of Sokar, while at the front end was a prow in the shape of an antelope's head and neck. This looked back toward the cabinet, in which was placed an idol, seemingly of stone, in which the soul of the god was thought to dwell. This representation of Sokar would remain in its own "room" as the barque was paraded on a sled around the boundaries of the city. Midway in the proceedings the vessel would be taken by canal to a sanctuary of Sokar, attached to what was known as the Shetayet shrine, and here the "secrets" or "mysteries" of the god would be enacted.¹

It is thought possible that the henu barque actually resided in the sanctuary and was transferred to Memphis on the night before the first day of the festival. At the close of the event, the vessel would be replaced and left in storage until the following year. It was this apparent relationship between Sokar's festival and the Shetayet that led Professor I.E.S. Edwards (1909-1996), one of the greatest ever authorities on the Great Pyramid, to conclude that this shrine was located somewhere within Memphis's vast necropolis.²



13. The henu barque, featured in the festival of Sokar. A stone idol representing the god was housed in the “chapel” or “cabinet” on its deck.

Yet where exactly was this Shetayet shrine—built, seemingly, to honor the existence of an original secret chamber? Saqqara (or Sakkara) is the name given to a sprawling dynastic cemetery, including various pyramid fields, that once served Memphis. Its name derives, most likely, from the god Sokar. So perhaps the Shetayet shrine was here, in Saqqara. Yet, as Edwards pointed out in 1986, “Intermittent excavations in the site of the city [i.e., Memphis and Saqqara] during the past seventy-five years have revealed no trace of a sanctuary or a shrine of Sokar.”³

So if not in either Memphis or Saqqara, then where was the Shetayet shrine? Stelae and other inscribed artifacts found in the Memphis area honoring “Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, the great god, Lord of Rosetau,” speak of the Shetayet shrine in relation to a place called “upper Rosetau,”⁴ or Rostau, with Rostau being the domain of Sokar in the Am-duat text. In the knowledge that south was “up” and north was “lower” in the ancient Egyptian mindset, then it is safe to assume that Lower Rostau was the Giza plateau, while Upper Rostau was to the south in the vicinity of what Egyptologists refer to as Giza South, a satellite area of the more familiar pyramid field.

The Village of the Mount

The heart of Giza South, and thus almost certainly the location of Upper Rostau, was Kafr el-Gebel (or Kafret el-Gabal), meaning “settlement (kafr) of the mount (gebel).” Today this is merely the southern extent of another, much larger village called Nazlet el-Batran. At a kôm, or occupational mound, in Kafr el-Gebel, situated close to the edge of the Libyan desert, the remains of a temple dating from the reign of Rameses II, c. 1290-1224 BC, have been found.⁵ In the same area, inside another kôm (where evidence of illicit excavations were photographed in 1931⁶), the mud-brick wall of another pharaonic building was revealed, along with a stela containing an invocation of Osiris in the name of Khaemweset, a royal son of Rameses II. Its inscription speaks of “this gebel [hill] of Upper Rostau,” implying that this is the site of Upper Rostau.⁷

Although the exact location of this kôm is now lost, two pictures from 1931, showing the illicit excavations, contain in the background Muslim box tombs, suggesting that the site was somewhere in the proximity of the cemetery of Kafr el-Gebel, situated 1.5 miles (2 km) southeast of the Great Pyramid. Here cut stone blocks from the pharaonic era, as well as another stela in the name of Khaemweset, have been found, leading to the assumption that a major pharaonic building also once existed nearby.⁸

Some confirmation that this area was Upper Rostau, and very possibly the site of the Shetayet shrine visited during the annual festival of Sokar, comes from the knowledge that in Greco-Roman times a village serving visitors to the Giza pyramid field existed in the vicinity of Nazlet el-Batran. It was known as Busiris,⁹ a name honoring Osiris, hinting at the presence hereabouts of a shrine or temple dedicated to Ptah-Sokar-Osiris,¹⁰ a tripartite form of Sokar incorporating the Memphite creator god Ptah. Indeed, French Egyptologist Stéphane Pasquali proposed in 2007 that the kôm in Kafr el-Gebel was the site of the previously unidentified “Temple of Osiris of Rostaw” mentioned in the so-called Inventory Stela. This stone tablet was found during the 1850s (by her

fellow countryman August Mariette, 1821-1881) within the ruins of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty Temple of Isis, constructed on the east side of the Great Pyramid.

The Inventory Stela's inscription, aside from talking about the pharaoh Khufu, the builder of the Great Pyramid, making repairs to a preexisting Sphinx monument (see chapter nine), says that the Temple of Isis lies northwest of "Osiris, Lord of Rosta[u]," an apparent reference to a building honoring Osiris's tomb.¹¹ Going southeast from the Temple of Isis brings you into the vicinity of Kafr el-Gebel, suggesting that the Shetayet shrine was nearby. However, Edwards wanted to make it clear that there were most likely two quite separate structures involved here:

The Shetayet, Sokar's tomb, must have been a separate edifice, though probably near the sanctuary of the barque. An inscription in the Nineteenth Dynasty tomb of Tjay in Thebes mentions two Shetayet edifices "in the midst of (mhnw) Rosetau," which may mean nothing more than that they were in the necropolis of Giza South.¹²

Since "Sokar's tomb," as Edwards describes it, was the original Shetayet, which, as the tomb of Osiris, was thought to be underground, it is unlikely to have been a building of any kind. Thus the assumption that there were two Shetayets in Upper Rostau, or Giza South, probably implies that one was simply a shrine honoring the original Shetayet, while the other was the "tomb" itself, most likely hidden within a primeval mound seen as the place of first creation.

The presence in Upper Rostau of the Shetayet shrine, or sanctuary, tells us that by the reign of Rameses II, and arguably much earlier still, there existed a tradition implying that the original Shetayet was located in this vicinity, slightly away from the Giza pyramid field. Why exactly this might have been is explored in chapter ten. For the moment, we shall concentrate our efforts on understanding exactly what awaits discovery inside the underworld of Rostau, which Selim Hassan imagined as "a huge black tunnel through the thickness of

the earth, each end of which terminated in a sphinx or lion.”¹³

“Fire Is About It”

Enigmatic clues regarding the nature of the Shetayet, or secret chamber, are offered by the Coffin Texts, which replaced the Pyramid Texts in royal and private tombs from the Middle Kingdom onward. Here, they say, the deceased in their role as Osiris would finally come to “know the secret of the Duat”¹⁴ or “see the secret things” in this “deep place in Rostau,” named also as the “House of Osiris.”¹⁵

What exactly were these “secret things” that could be seen in the “deep place in Rostau”? Might we be privileged to know the “secret of the Duat”?

Some of the most enigmatic clues to this mystery come from the following two spells in the Coffin Texts. For instance, Spell #1080 tells us:

This is the sealed thing which is in darkness, with fire about it, which contains the efflux of Osiris, and it was put in Rostau. It has been hidden there since it fell from him, and it is what came down from him onto the desert sand; it means that what belongs to him was put in Rostau . . .¹⁶

The mention of “efflux” here is an allusion, generally, to sweat or bodily fluids, although this does not seem to be all there is present in the darkness of the tomb. It is a matter expanded in a second, even more enigmatic, spell #1087:

This is the word which is in darkness. As for any spirit who knows it, he will live among the living. Fire is about it, which contains the efflux of Osiris. As for any man who shall know it, he will never perish there, since he knows what shall

be in Rostau. Rostau is hidden since he [Osiris] fell there . . . Rostau is [another name] for Osiris. As for any man who is there, he will see Osiris every day, his breath will be in his nose, and he will never die.¹⁷

It seems that if this “efflux of Osiris” is to be seen as more than simply the enlivened bodily waste of Osiris, then we are looking at some kind of sacred relic, or power object, concealed in the darkness. Indeed, we read that whatever lies in wait “contains the efflux of Osiris” (emphasis mine), not that it is the “efflux” itself. So why should it be said of this object that “fire is about it”? Somehow this conjures up the image of an unearthly radiance, like a perpetual fire raging in the darkness.

Point of First Creation

Is it possible that the pictorial representations of the Fifth Hour in the Am-duat text provide further clues regarding what lies in darkness within the secret chamber? These, as we have already determined, show a bell-shaped object, seemingly an omphalos, as well as a pyramid mound, beneath which is an oval, or egg-shaped, island in the river of the Duat. All three images—located in the Land of Sokar and under the protection of Sokar—can be seen as representative of first creation and the elevation of the first land from the primeval waters of Nun, as we saw in chapter four.

The most well-known version of the Egyptian creation myth was that promulgated by the Heliopolitan priesthood. In this, the island or mound that emerged from the primeval waters was seen as an expression of the creator god Atum, who, as the sun god Re, shone forth his rays at the moment of creation, bringing light into the world. This illuminated the island on which was now seen a conical stone called the Benben. It acted as a perch for Atum-Re in his form as a bird of creation called the bennu (known in Greek as the Phoenix), which is generally depicted in ancient Egyptian art as a bird resembling a heron (see figure 14). This species of bird was probably chosen to symbolize the soul of the creator god, since it was often seen perching on the small islands of mud that would appear on the Nile flood plains following the annual inundation.

In the past, it was thought that the name Benben, the name given to the conical stone of creation, derived from a root word meaning something like “to copulate, to beget, to be begotten, virile, phallus”¹⁸—all of which relate to the process of regeneration. Yet more modern thought has Benben derive from the root *weben*, meaning “to shine.”¹⁹ This recalls the mysterious object alluded to in the Coffin Texts with “fire” about it, as well as the bell-shaped object in the Fifth Hour of the duat underworld.

A representation of the Benben stone is thought to have stood on a pedestal inside the Mansion of the Benben (hwt-bnbn), located within the temple complex of Atum-Re in Heliopolis. It has been suggested that this sacred stone might have been fashioned from meteoric iron,²⁰ a substance with obvious cosmic connotations. This becomes a particularly attractive idea in the knowledge that the omphali, or navel stones, revered at Egyptian temples dedicated to the god Amun in Siwah, Napata, and Thebes, were themselves thought to have been either meteorites or objects that bore the familiar pear- or teardrop-like appearance of some meteorites.²¹



14. The bennu bird, the soul essence of the Heliopolitan creator god Atum-re, perched on the Benben stone, an abstract form of the island, or mound, of creation.

Ethereal Fire

From all of this, it becomes clear that the object alluded to in the Coffin Texts as containing the “efflux” of Osiris and existing in the darkness of the Shetayet in Giza-Rostau was some kind of omphalos, or “navel” stone, perhaps even the original Benben stone—something deemed to generate its own divine radiance. The apparent connection between omphali, the Benben stone, and meteorites strongly suggests a connection with the night and perhaps even the chemiluminescent, or plasmatic, trails produced by fireballs and falling stars. Confining such a powerful object in a sealed and darkened environment might have inspired the belief that it continued to produce a radiance or fire because of its extraterrestrial origin.

Even though the Heliopolitan priesthood promoted the belief that its own cult center marked the place of first creation, there were rival claimants. These included the royal seat of Memphis, with its powerful priesthood of the creator god Ptah, whose form as Ta-tjenen, meaning “elevated land,” impressed the idea that the large river island on which the city was built marked the place of first creation. Thebes (modern Karnak), the center for the cult of the god Amun in southern Egypt, made similar claims, as did the cult center of Thoth (or Tehuti), the god of writing and wisdom, in Hermopolis, in Middle Egypt.

However, the Coffin Texts, the Am-duat, and other funerary texts all strongly suggest that Giza-Rostau was itself seen as a place of first creation, and despite the attempts of both the Memphite and Heliopolitan priesthoods to assimilate the cult of Sokar, its center in Rostau somehow managed to retain its significance as the site of the Shetayet, which might just have contained some kind of I like the Benben stone of Heliopolitan tradition. It is a theory strengthened in the knowledge that Sokar was himself associated with the Benben stone.

Cultic Stone

In the annual festival of Sokar, one of the days was known as “the dragging of the Benben,”²² which has been interpreted as “a stone, his cultic image perhaps . . . [being] dragged across the fields in a barque.”²³ This can be identified as the stone idol, containing the soul of the god, kept in the cabinet upon the deck of the henu barque. Such stones were known among the ancient cultures of the Levant and Near East as baetyls (from the Semitic beth-el, meaning “house of god”). They were usually large, naturally polished stones set on plinths. At other times, baetyls were either round-topped portable stones or conical pillars, very much like the standing stones of Western Europe and the omphali of the Greek Hellenic world. The use of baetyls as cultic objects was widespread, and very often they symbolized the essence of creation, or the abode of a god. Perhaps the best-known baetyl is the Black Stone, contained in the Ka’bah at the center of the Great Mosque in Mecca. This is believed by many to be a meteorite.



15. Ancient coin showing an oversized baetyl within a temple to the god Elagabal, “lord of the mountain,” in Emesa, Syria. Such stones bear similarities to the omphali of the ancient Greek world as well as the Benben stone of Heliopolitan tradition.

Even in the Pyramid Texts we find that the Benben stone was said to exist “in the Mansion of Sokar,”²⁴ making it clear that there was once a very ancient connection between Sokar, the Benben, and the Shetayet. It hints also that the falcon god’s idol, or baetyl, kept in the cabinet upon the henu barque was perhaps a representation of the real power object thought to exist underground within the Shetayet, or secret chamber.

So if the strange object in the tomb of Sokar-Osiris with “fire about it” was synonymous with the Benben stone, perhaps it played a role in reanimating the soul of the deceased in order for it to enter the hereafter as an akh, a radiant spirit at one with the starry realms. Dr. Mark Lehner believes that this is what occurred when the sun god passed over the pyramid mound containing the ellipse, or “egg,” depicted in connection with the Am-duat’s Fifth Hour:

The texts state that not even the sun god can penetrate Sokar’s chamber, but his passage and his words to Sokar in the sealed chamber set off a reaction within the egg.²⁵

Thus it appears that this “sealed chamber,” the Shetayet, located within the primeval mound, was perhaps a symbolic womb in which life was seen to begin anew. Marija Gimbutas (1921-1994), the celebrated Lithuanian prehistorian and archaeologist, wrote extensively about the religion of birth, death, and regeneration among the Neolithic peoples of Old Europe and Western Asia, and had this to say about subterranean chambers being seen as womb-like environments:

Caves, with their hidden, cool atmosphere, stalagmites, stalactites, and underground streams, exude a mysterious quality perhaps equated to the regeneration of life itself: the enclosed spaces of caves symbolize the birth canal and womb of the goddess.²⁶

If correct, then I suspect that this was a belief created in Giza long before the emergence of its famous pyramid field and recalled within Egyptian creation myths and funerary works. This included the Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, Amduat, Book of Two Ways, and the various other underworld texts—all of which display some knowledge of this secret, and very ancient, place that existed underground in Giza-Rostau and was thought to be not only a chamber of creation, but also a place of transformation and rebirth for a primeval god remembered under the names Sokar and Osiris.

In the next two chapters we shall find confirmation from inscriptions on the walls of a temple in southern Egypt that a very precious object—symbolizing the point of first creation—existed in Giza's underworld during a mythical epoch known as Zep Tepi—the First Occasion.

Homeland of the Primeval Ones

The most compelling evidence for an advanced culture occupying the Nile Valley in prehistoric times comes from the so-called building texts of a Greco-Roman temple in Edfu in southern Egypt (the Upper Egypt of dynastic times), built between 237 BC and 57 BC. What is more, these same records allude to the existence somewhere near Giza of a deep underground structure that contains an object of great power, which closely echoes what has already been gleaned from the various ancient Egyptian funerary texts.

There is nothing unique about the presence on temple walls of building texts, for they once adorned those of every major temple in Egypt. Each recounted its own version of how the physical world came into being. Usually, these creation accounts state that their respective temples were constructed on or close to the site where this happened, but not in Edfu. Here the records imply that this great event took place elsewhere in Egypt—apparently far to the north, in the vicinity of Memphis in Lower Egypt.

The Primeval Mound

The Edfu inscriptions are in actuality a patchwork of stories—fragments of texts deriving from several lost sources—with titles such as “Specification of the Sacred Mounds,” “Sacred Book of the Early Primeval Age of the Gods,” “The Coming of Re to his Mansion of Ms-nht,” and another entitled “Offering the Lotus.”¹

All these primary sources convey a vivid, albeit complex and sometimes confusing, picture of how the physical world came into being during an epoch known as Zep Tepi, the First Occasion.² It begins with the appearance of a company of divine beings, referred to as the Primeval Ones, the Eldest Ones, or even the Most Aged Ones, who emerge from the nothingness, the product seemingly of a creative power in the form of a snake.³ Yet the Primeval Ones are also said to have “begat themselves without father and mother [emphasis in the original] and were the seed of their own creation . . . the Fathers who fertilized, the Mothers who gave birth, the ones who were first to beget and to create the egg [swht]; the bulls who impregnated, the cows who conceived.”⁴

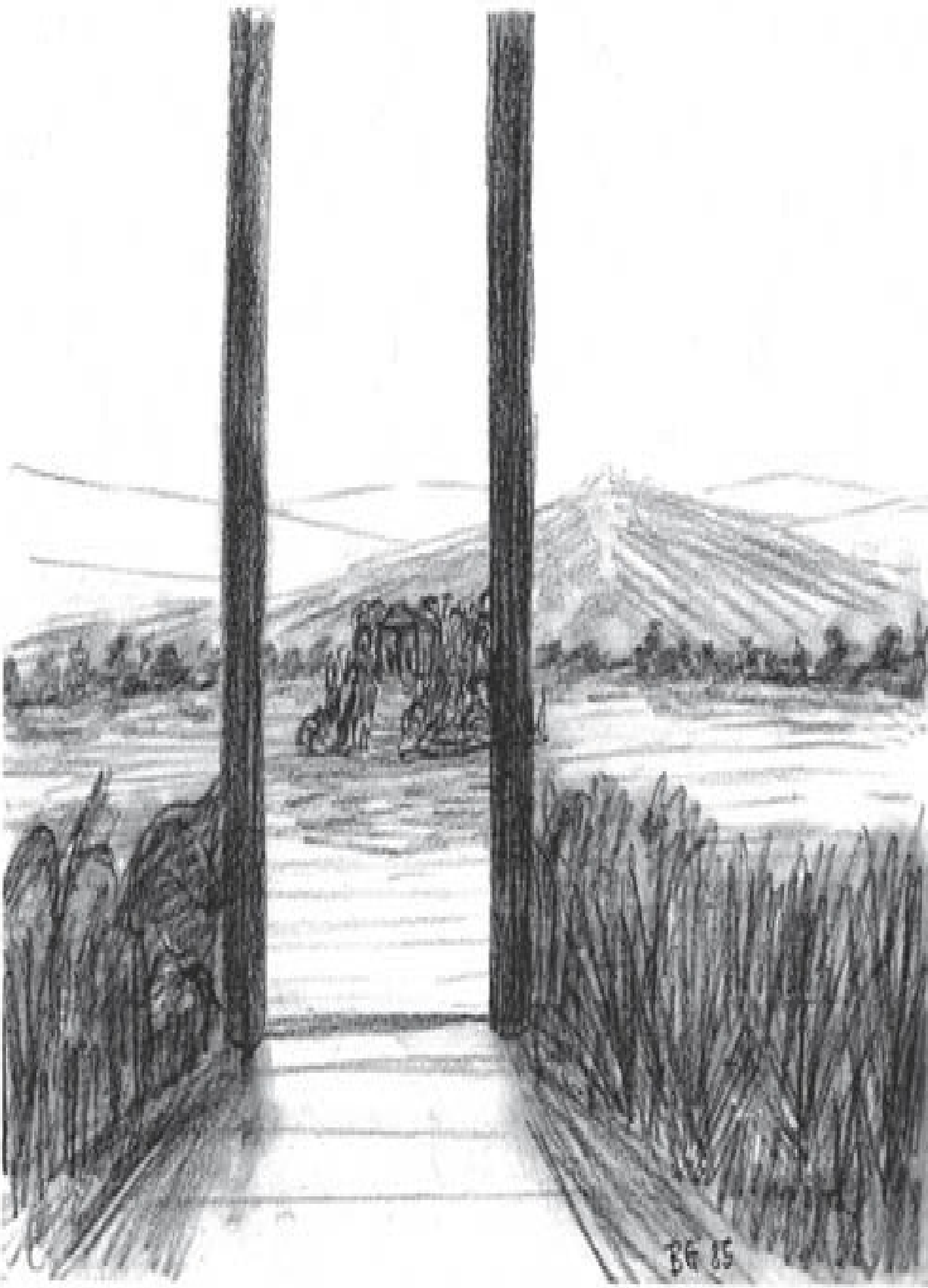
The best commentary on the Edfu building texts is that given by Polish-born Egyptologist Eve Reymond (née Jelinkova) in her indispensable work, *The Mythical Origin of the Egyptian Temple* (1969), and it is from this that I shall attempt to provide a basic précis of their extraordinary and unique contents. As mind-wrenching as some of this material will seem, it is essential to our understanding of the evolution of Giza’s lost underworld.

The Island of the Egg

Reymond saw the Primeval Ones in terms of formless, natural powers without individual personalities.⁵ On other occasions, she clearly expressed that they should be thought of as flesh-and-blood zoomorphs (human beings with animal or bird attributes), who had spirit doubles (kas) and souls (bas) that existed independently of their physical bodies. Sometimes these ancestral beings seemed to inhabit a mythical world of their own making, yet at other times they were unquestionably building shelters, shrines, temples, and enclosures that existed as part of a thriving prehistoric community somewhere on the edge of the Nile flood plains.

The first act to occur in the mythical world, according to the Edfu records, was the bringing forth of the bnnt (pronounced either “benent” or “benenet”), seen by Reymond as the “embryo of the Earth,”⁶ existing where “the mystic union between the Primeval Ones and Nun occurred.”⁷ This the Primeval Ones achieve by forming themselves into four pairs of bulls and cows⁸ and using their “phallus” to inseminate the bnnt, which henceforth becomes the “Mother of the Earth.”⁹

The first solid matter formed is a lotus, and around this is a pool or field of reeds upon an island,¹⁰ which gains the name “Province of the Beginning.”¹¹ The Primeval Ones then bring forth an “egg”¹² that, although not directly involved in the creative process, encompasses the Bnnt embryo.¹³ This then becomes the basis of the primeval mound, which henceforth takes the name Island of the Egg (iw-swht).¹⁴ By this time, the Primeval Ones, along with their serpentine creator (now expressed as a nameless earth god, or “Earth Maker”), are said to have “shaped their bodily appearance.”¹⁵ It is by using this solid form that they emit an unearthly radiance which illuminates the primeval waters.¹⁶



86 85

16. Artist's impression of Egypt's primordial island of first creation, on which the Edfu building texts describe the construction of a sacred shrine or temple, beneath which was a subterranean structure called the *duat n ba*, or Underworld of the Soul.

On the island there emerges a "High Hill," confirming it as the location of the original primeval mound.¹⁷ From the Nun then comes another group of beings known as the *Kas*, the creators, who draw forth the sun god *Re*. He shines out from the lotus in the center of the pool, gradually drying up the water beyond the shores in order that the creation process might begin in earnest.¹⁸

This, in a nutshell, is how the physical world came into being, according to a text entitled "Offering the Lotus," found inscribed within the *naos*, or inner sanctuary, in Edfu. The story is picked up again in other Edfu texts, and these elaborate greatly on what happens next, even though each account differs slightly.

As stated above, the existence of an original place of creation was familiar to the earliest cult centers of Egypt, which adapted their respective versions of this myth to suit their own local requirements. Yet, as Eve Reymond pointed out, "The major thought in all of them, however, is the same: there was at the beginning of the world an island in which the first sacred domain was constituted."¹⁹ She added:

. . . we are inclined to conclude that the Edfu accounts of the origin of the primeval island, and of its function in the creation of the physical world of gods and men, disclose genuine thoughts and beliefs of a remote age.²⁰

Yet, even with what we have seen so far concerning the Island of the Egg (called also the Island of the Two Flames²¹), we can discern distinct echoes of the Amduat's portrayal of the Fifth Hour of the duat underworld. In this we saw an oval island on which Sokar stands holding open the wings of a multiheaded snake. Curiously, not in Edfu but in Karnak (ancient Thebes) in southern Egypt, creation texts speak of the bnnt as the ba, or soul, of the snake god Kematef.²² Remember also that the Edfu texts reveal that the creator of the Primeval Ones was a snake that subsequently became the nameless earth god. Is it upon this snake that Sokar stands? It is a matter we shall return to in due course.

Island of Trampling

Returning to the Edfu account, we read next of a second phase of activity on the primeval island, which is now called the Island of Trampling (iw-titi). The lotus in the pool at the center of the island has been replaced by a so-called dd pillar, constructed, Raymond suggests, from reeds that grew in the water. This, then, becomes the perch of the nameless earth god, the creative power behind the first phase of activity on the island.²³ Not much is known about this earth god, although he is curiously referred to as Pn—“This One”—and has now taken on the form of a bird, seemingly the falcon.²⁴

A new company of mythical beings then gather on the island. One of them is a falcon named Nefer-hr, called also the “Sanctified Ruler” and the “Ruler of the Wing.” He arrives with another deity called Heter-hr; the hr element alluding to the shining “countenance,” or radiance, that emanates from the faces of these individuals.²⁵ Both Nefer-hr and Heter-hr appear to be projections of the nameless Earth Maker and are very likely his ka (spirit double) and ba (soul), which are themselves named as individual entities that turn up on the scene, making a total of five separate ruling intelligences. If this were not enough, another company of divine beings called the Falcons or Sages emerge from the primeval waters of Nun. They come under the leadership of Nefer-hr.²⁶ In the Edfu account, the Falcons are imagined as perching on the reeds that surround the dd pillar, on which sits the nameless earth god. Of course, this idea of birds perching is found also in the Heliopolitan creation account, in which the bennu bird uses the conical-shaped Benben stone as a perch. Clearly, the dd pillar has taken the place of the Benben stone in the Edfu account.

The Falcons and the other divine beings then erect the mythological world’s first built structure, described as a “shelter.”²⁷ This is created to contain the dd pillar as the nucleus of the island. At the same time, an enclosure is constructed around the edges of the pool, called also the “field of reeds.” Inside the shelter are placed certain power objects belonging to the nameless earth god, which, aside

from the dd pillar, include a sacred mace, called Great White (arguably, a symbol of sovereignty), and something referred to as the “Image of the Front of God.” The structure is called the Mansion of Isden,²⁸ and according to Reymond, this would have been square in shape and fashioned from bound bundles of reeds, a method of construction used to build religious shrines in prehistoric Egypt.²⁹

Death of the First Occasion

The appearance of the Mansion of Isden brings to a close the second phase of activity on the island. So far, it has all been about creation and growth, but now something terrible occurs. There is clear evidence from the Edfu account that the Homeland of the Primeval Ones becomes the scene of a conflict, an aggression, and even a battle between the original inhabitants and an incoming enemy. To start with, the place of creation is now referred to as the Island of Combat and Island of Peace, which somehow preempts, or reflects, this new situation. At the same time that this conflict occurs, the Edfu records tell us that something called the Sound Eye falls.³⁰ As to what this might have been is never made clear, although Reymond suggested it was “the centre of the light which illumined the island.”³¹

Coincident to the Sound Eye falling, the primeval waters of Nun are plunged into darkness during a “storm” that, according to Reymond, is “so violent . . . it destroyed the sacred land with the result that the divine inhabitants died.”³² These mythical individuals are henceforth referred to as the “ancestors” or “ghosts,”³³ exemplifying their new condition. As a result of the catastrophe, the island of creation is completely submerged by the primeval waters, resulting in the destruction of the sacred domain, including the Mansion of Isden. This truly was the “death” of the First Occasion.³⁴

Underworld of the Soul

Thereafter, the island of creation becomes a “tomb” for the ghosts of its divine inhabitants, including their leader, the nameless earth god. Indeed, they would seem to have taken up residence in a structure “concealed underneath [emphasis mine]” the island, which bears the title *duat n ba*, Underworld of the Soul.³⁵

Crucially, the name used for the primeval water surrounding the island now changes to one that is found elsewhere in Egyptian myth for the part of the Nun where the god Osiris was drowned “and in which his grave was.”³⁶ There is something very important here, for this is the first indication that the Underworld of the Soul of the Edfu texts is one and the same as the tomb of Sokar-Osiris, which we know to have been synonymous with the mythical chamber of creation, associated with the Duat of Memphis, that was thought to exist in the vicinity of the Giza pyramid field.

Confirming this surmise is the fact that the Edfu records assert that Osiris was “pre-eminent in the Underworld of the Soul.”³⁷ Reymond wrote, in this respect, that “there is a clear allusion to a burial place, which was possibly, it may be suggested, [originally] that of the earth god.” The “soul” in the name Underworld of the Soul would appear to have been that of this nameless earth god who, as we have seen, assumed the form of a falcon. In other words, although Osiris became preeminent in the Underworld of the Soul, its original dweller was the nameless earth god,³⁸ leading Reymond to conclude that these facts “seem to allude to the belief that a chthonic deity was the first deceased god in Egyptian mythology.”³⁹

Sokar as God of Creation

Bearing all of this in mind, there has to be a possibility that the identity of the original earth god involved in the creation process on the Island of the Egg, and then entombed in the Underworld of the Soul, was none other than Sokar. As a chthonic, falcon-headed deity, he presided over not only the oval island of the duat underworld in the Am-duat but also the entire Fifth Hour, complete with its other symbols of creation—the primeval mound and bell-like object, suspected of being an omphalos, baetyl, or Benben stone.

The other great earth god encountered in ancient Egyptian underworld texts is the recumbent lion Aker, which, in his twin, double-headed form, guarded the entrance and exit to the duat underworld. More importantly, Aker is not just a personal name—it can also mean “earth god.”⁴⁰ That the hieroglyphs used to make up the root *kr* in Aker (*akr*) are found also in the name Sokar (*skr*) adds weight to the belief that the falcon-headed god was the nameless earth god of the Edfu account.⁴¹

In addition to these factors suggesting that Sokar was the primeval earth god entombed in the Underworld of the Soul, we learn that in a version of the Egyptian Book of the Dead known as the “Papyrus of Ani” (since it was written for a deceased man named Ani, who lived c. 1240 BC), the divine presence inhabiting the cabinet, or shrine, on Sokar’s *henu* barque is the “soul of Geb.”⁴² Geb was the Heliopolitan earth god who, as early as the Pyramid Texts, is said to have either fathered snakes or was associated with them.⁴³ It was a connection borne out of the fact that snakes were known to inhabit holes or hide in the darkness of caves and caverns. Later, in the New Kingdom, Geb was occasionally shown as a snake-headed individual beneath his twin sister, Nuit, represented naked, arched over the sky. These forms of Geb certainly link both Geb and Sokar with the Edfu account’s nameless earth god, which originally possessed a serpentine form before assuming the guise of a bird, seemingly the falcon. In fact, it was the above statement in the “Papyrus of Ani” regarding

Sokar being the “soul of Geb” that prompted Sir E. A. Wallis Budge (1857-1934), the famous British Egyptologist and language scholar, to observe: “From this it is clear that SEKER [i.e., Sokar] was an ancient Earth-god whose abode was as black as night.”⁴⁴

In the knowledge that Sokar’s sacred domain was Rostau-Giza and in the funerary text entitled *The Book of Two Ways*, the “Highland of Aker” is, according to Egyptologist Selim Hassan, a reference to the Giza necropolis, then it seems certain that Egypt’s island or mound of creation was to be found somewhere in the vicinity of the plateau. If so, then it would mean that since the Underworld of the Soul was located beneath the island of creation, then it had to be the physical representation of the duat underworld that Hassan became convinced existed in Giza. Yet if such a structure did exist, then what more could we learn about it, and when exactly was it constructed? There are some major clues in the Edfu records, as we shall find out next.

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Fall of the First Occasion

According to the Edfu building texts, the original island of creation was submerged at the climax of an age called Zep Tepi, the First Occasion. Yet can we pin down this mythical epoch in real time? The clue is the harbinger that brought forth the cataclysm and plunged the world into darkness, submerging the Homeland of the Primeval Ones and bringing about the death of its divine inhabitants, for it is said to have been a gigantic “enemy snake” called the “Great Leaping One.”¹

We are told that this enemy snake existed both on the ground and in the air, for the Edfu account speaks of how four contingents of incoming, divine inhabitants—united under the symbols of the snake, the lion, the bull, and the hawk, and led by an individual called the Falcon—engaged the enemy snake in combat. However, at the same time, the Falcon is said to have taken the battle to the sky, where he also engaged the Great Leaping One.² Arguably, the enemy snake on the ground alludes to a tribal emblem belonging to a particular group or individual responsible for attacking those on the island at this time of great violence and turmoil. The astral snake, however, was something else, either a constellation of stars or, as I suspect, a comet.



17. Map of Egypt showing the principal sites featured in the book.

Since time immemorial, comets have been described or remembered in terms of fiery serpents and heavenly dragons crossing the sky.³ Catastrophe myths worldwide feature the appearance of a celestial snake that is occasionally said to fall to earth, causing darkness, deluges, and conflagrations—all indicative of major cataclysms. So if the Great Leaping One of the Edfu texts was a comet, then can we equate it with a time frame involving just such a catastrophe? The answer is, firmly, yes.

Comet Strike

It has now been pretty well established that toward the end of the Pleistocene age, which marked the cessation of the last Ice Age, a comet impacted the North American continent c. 11,000 BC, resulting in fierce firestorms that engulfed wide areas of the landmass.⁴ This catastrophic event is suspected of being instrumental in the extinction, or virtual extinction, of dozens of species of Pleistocene megafauna, such as the mammoth, giant sloth, mastodon, saber-toothed tiger, and so on, as well as the decimation of a greater part of the native population, composed mainly of a people known in archaeology as the Clovis culture. Literally hundreds of catastrophe myths told by indigenous peoples across the North American continent bear witness to this forgotten event in human history.

The effects of the fierce firestorms across North America left behind a “charcoal-rich layer” that scientists refer to as the Usselo horizon.⁵ Not only has it been detected in many parts of the North American continent, but it has also turned up in the Netherlands, France, Germany, Belgium, White Russia, India, South Africa, Australia and, crucially, Egypt, showing how the impact of the comet may have reached as far away as the Nile Valley.

It is possible that the Edfu building texts recall a distant epoch immediately prior to, during, and directly after the comet impact, c. 11,000-10,000 BC, providing an exact time frame for the climax of Zep Tepi (the First Occasion). The enemy snake called the Great Leaping One could easily be an abstract memory of the comet responsible for the cataclysm, which is thought to have included an associated period of darkness, when the sun would have become invisible owing to the high levels of soot and smoke in the upper atmosphere. Indeed, the aftereffects of the event may well have triggered a re-advance of the ice sheets in the Northern Hemisphere, causing a mini ice age of about one thousand years, something that paleo-climatologists refer to as the Younger Dryas. This devastating sequence of events, which took place in relatively recent geological

history, could explain the darkness that overcame the Homeland of the Primeval Ones as well as the submergence of the island—a situation perhaps caused by mega tsunamis, tidal displacement, and rapid shifts in the water level.

Catastrophic Events

So, what was really happening in Egypt at this time, and how does it relate to what we are told went on in the Edfu account? Mythical history is simply myth. Yet what we do know is that around 10,500 BC, “truly massive Nile floods”⁶ caused “a prolonged series of natural disasters”⁷ that brought about “catastrophic events”⁸ experienced by the Late Palaeolithic peoples occupying the flood plains of Upper Egypt and Lower Nubia (northern Sudan). Immediately before these events happened, in an epoch referred to by geologists and archaeologists as the Sahaba-Darau Aggradation, c. 13,000-10,500 BC,⁹ something remarkable had begun to take place among the Nilotic peoples of this region. They are known to have developed a highly advanced microblade (fine tool) technology, using ultra-hard diorite, flint, and agate to create the tips of spears, darts, arrows, burins, harpoons, and sickles superior to anything their rivals were producing [at this time] in other parts of the ancient world.¹⁰ In addition to this, these advanced peoples were living in spacious, semipermanent communities, likened to the earliest Neolithic farming villages created thousands of years later in central Europe, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), and Western Asia.¹¹ Most important of all, they had begun experimenting with primitive forms of agriculture.

Experiments in Agriculture

At a number of sites belonging to prehistoric societies known as the Isnan and Qadan, who lived in southern Egypt and Lower Nubia, overwhelming evidence for the domestication of wild grasses, wheat, and barley was unearthed during the 1960s by American Egyptologist and prehistorian Dr. Fred Wendorf and his team.¹² These findings derive from an examination of pollen deposits collected from the sites in question as well as the discovery of a large number of well-used grindstones and sickle blades, the latter of which bear a polished sheen typical of having been used to cut and reap plants.¹³ Moreover, at the same time, the presence of fish bones almost completely vanish, meaning that those who lived in the settlements were no longer reliant on catching fish from the Nile as a staple part of their diet.¹⁴

Current scholarly thinking sways away from accepting such radical advances among the earliest Egyptians, living in the savannas and flood plains of the Upper Nile.¹⁵ However, if earlier interpretations of this evidence prove to be correct, then it tells us that toward the end of the last Ice Age, the peoples of southern Egypt and northern Sudan were pulling ahead of their contemporaries in Europe and Western Asia to create semipermanent settlements with some kind of structured society, very typical of the much later Neolithic period.

What is so important to our story is that the widespread “experiments” in proto-agriculture among the Isnan and Qadan suddenly vanish about 10,500 BC,¹⁶ coincident to the massive Nile floods that overran the flood plains. At the same time, there is a complete disappearance of the grinding stones and sickle blades earlier used for plant cultivation.¹⁷ Agriculture does not reappear in Egypt until approximately 5500-5000 BC, when it is reintroduced by the descendents of the Natufian peoples that thrived in what is today Israel, Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon. Gone too is the advanced microblade technology and Neolithic-style villages, and in their place come Qadan communities reliant again on fishing, hunting, and gathering. What’s more, these people now employ the use of a

stone technology little different from their contemporaries in Europe and the Middle East.

The Chilling Case of Site 117

More disturbing is chilling evidence from a Late Palaeolithic cemetery in Jebel Sahaba (a few miles north of Wadi Haifi, near Tushka in northern Sudan, approximately 150 miles, or 255 km, upriver from Aswan in Egypt) of an unprecedented level of violence hitting the local population.¹⁸ At a Qadan cemetery close to the Nile known as Site 117, Professor Wendorf and his team unearthed graves containing the skeletons of fifty-nine males, females, and children inside oval pits covered by sandstone slabs.¹⁹ In no less than twenty-four individuals, excavators found 110 stone blades or flints located either inside the skulls or within the rib cages, coincident to vital organs.²⁰ In four instances, the flake points were actually imbedded in bone that had not yet started to heal,²¹ showing that the individuals must have sustained fatal wounds immediately prior to death. In still other cases, there were deep cuts on bones consistent with the person having suffered serious injury from an extremely sharp, stone implement, possibly a knife.²² Here and there the excavators found multiple graves—two containing four individuals apparently buried in a hurry.²³

This grim evidence reveals that up to 40 percent of the fifty-nine people interred in Site 117 suffered extremely brutal and violent deaths. This was through either arrow or dart wounds, or the actions of spear throwers or knife wielders.²⁴ More significantly, the age of the cemetery, derived from the style of stone tools found, dates to an approximate time frame of c.10,500-10,000 BC,²⁵ very close to the date of the cessation of proto-agriculture among the Isnan and Qadan communities. A similar Qadan cemetery across the river, containing thirty-nine graves, shows no evidence at all of violence. Indeed, this second cemetery would seem to have been in use during a slightly different period, when there was little, if any, violent conflict among the local communities. If correct, then it highlights that whatever happened to those interred in Site 117 was not simply the result of any normal violent behavior among such settlements, but a sustained outburst of unprecedented turmoil that occurred during a short space of time.

Thus there are grounds to speculate that what happened in Jebel Sahuba around 10,500-10,000 BC was the result of widespread social and climatic upheaval in the outside world, in the wake of the proposed comet fragmentation over the North American continent. As indicated earlier, this probably included a period of darkness, like a nuclear winter, caused by smoke and soot in the upper atmosphere blocking out sunlight for a period of weeks, months, or even years (hence the charcoal-rich layer known as the Usselo horizon being detected in Egypt).²⁶ There is enough here to tell us why previously peaceful communities might have descended into bloodshed and violence, most likely created by the sheer drive for survival, coupled with forced migrations into neighboring territories, and famines caused by the failure of crops and the disappearance of regular food sources.

That great advances in human evolution would appear to have been taking place among the earliest Egyptians (c. 13,000-10,500 BC) just prior to this catastrophic upheaval adds weight to the possibility that some of their northern cousins might have been busy creating the first permanent, sacred domain around a moundlike island on the edge of the Nile flood plains in far-off Giza. However, as with the sudden disappearance of the experiments in agriculture among the Isnán and Qadan population of southern Egypt and northern Sudan, the efforts of these faceless individuals would have been curtailed in the aftermath of the comet strike. Even though the Edfu account does not suggest that this early human society developed a civilization or was responsible for the construction of the Great Pyramid, the Sphinx, or a fabulous city, we suddenly start to realize that Edgar Cayce's vision of a high culture in Giza c. 11,000-10,000 BC might not be so far removed from the truth as was first imagined. It is a surmise confirmed as we return to the situation on the edge of the island of creation.

Temple of the Falcon

Even as the darkness prevails in the wake of the cataclysm, a new phase of activity commences. The incoming divine inhabitants, under their leader, the Falcon, are finally able to defeat the forces of the enemy snake. At the same time, a ritual enclosure called *bw-tpy*—meaning the “First Place,” the “Place of the First One,”²⁷ or perhaps the “Place (*bw*) of the First (*tpy*)”—is constructed on the marginal lands, or flood plains, in the vicinity of the island, which is still engulfed by a “great inundation.”²⁸

We then read that ancestral beings called the *Shebtiw*, the chief of whom are named as *Wa* and ‘*Aa*, emerge from the *Nun*. They notice the tip of the reeds, marking the position of the original pool at the center of the submerged island, and thus speak sacred spells to make the waters recede. With this magical act complete, a new perch is erected to replace the old one, and this becomes the seat of their leader, the Falcon. When this is accomplished, the souls and ghosts of the previous inhabitants, including the nameless earth god, are resurrected. They take their place alongside the living inhabitants as guardians of the island.

In honor of the former occupants of the island and its leader, the nameless earth god, the incoming groups of divine beings erect a structure called the Temple of the Falcon (known also as the Mansion of *Msnht*: see chapter nine). This is constructed on or close to the island, which now appears to be surrounded by a water channel, beyond which, presumably, is dry land.²⁹ It is celebrated as the first permanently built structure and becomes the role model for all subsequent temples built in Egypt.

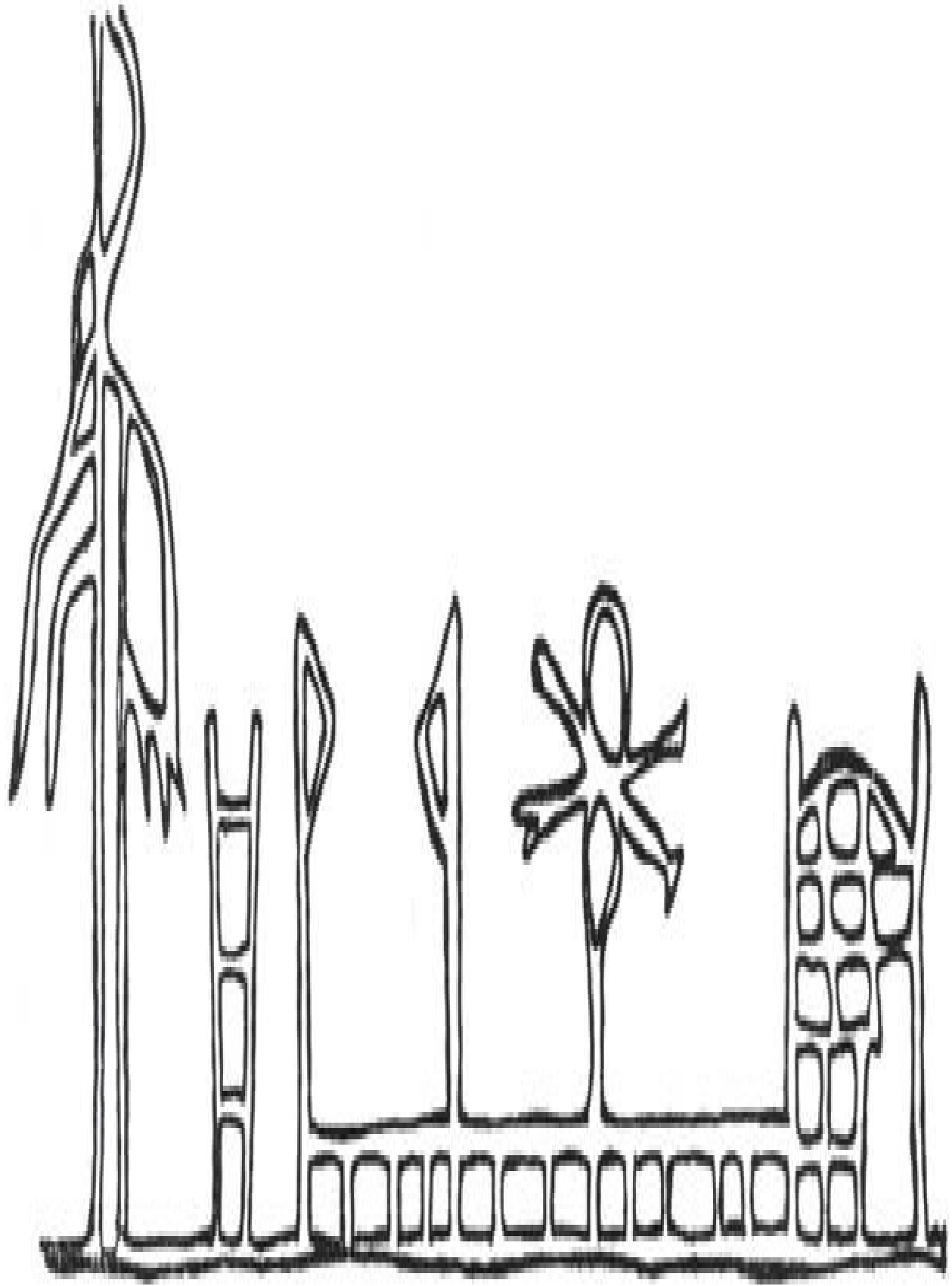
After an undisclosed period, another flood threatens the island, causing the first temple and its accompanying structures to become damaged or destroyed. However, the texts tell us that the *Shebtiw*, *Wa* and ‘*Aa*, are instructed by the

God-of-the-temple to enter the gloriously named Place-in-which-the-things-of-the-earth-were-filled-with-power, which we find is yet another name for either the island itself or the Underworld of the Soul. Here they retrieve certain power objects, named as iht, a word implying “relic,”³⁰ which they use in conjunction with sacred spells to make the waters recede once more from the island.³¹ Afterward, Wa and ‘Aa are said, simply, to have “sailed away” to what Reymond described as “another part of the mythical world to continue their creative task.”³²

Following the disappearance of the last ancestral beings responsible for the construction of Egypt’s first sacred domain, which grew up around the original island of creation, a new race of demigods enters the picture. Known as the Shemsu-hor, the “followers of the hawk-headed god Horus,” they go on to become the forerunners of the dynastic Egyptians. Surviving royal canons and king lists talk of an age when the Shemsu-hor ruled Egypt, prior to the unification of the country and the rise of the first pharaoh, sometime around 3100 BC. Just five hundred years later, the Great Pyramid and its neighbors would be built, marking a pinnacle of architectural achievement for the ancient Egyptians.

Homeland of the Egyptian Temple

Egyptologist Eve Reymond was as perplexed as anyone by the Edfu building texts. Yet instead of dismissing them as mythological fantasy, she rather daringly advanced the theory that the built structures and sacred domains being described actually existed in Egypt during some primordial age. She went on to propose that the Edfu records “preserve the memory of a pre-dynastic religious center which once existed near to Memphis, on which the Egyptians looked as . . . the homeland of the Egyptian temple.”³³



18. Predynastic representation of a temple and enclosure (after Reymond). Did such a complex exist in Giza in primordial times, centered around an island of creation?

More specifically, Reymond stated that the original sacred domain of the Primeval Ones, established to preside over the island of creation, was situated north of the city of Memphis.³⁴ This is confirmed by a statement in one Edfu record that Egypt's mythical temple (called here the "First Province of the Falcon") "was built at the dictates of the Ancestors according to what was written in this book which descended from the sky to the north of Memphis."³⁵ (Emphasis in the original.) If Reymond was right, then it confirmed that somewhere in this same area, north of Memphis, arguably in the vicinity of Giza, was the Underworld of the Soul, which still awaited discovery. If so, then were we any closer to understanding its exact function and whereabouts?

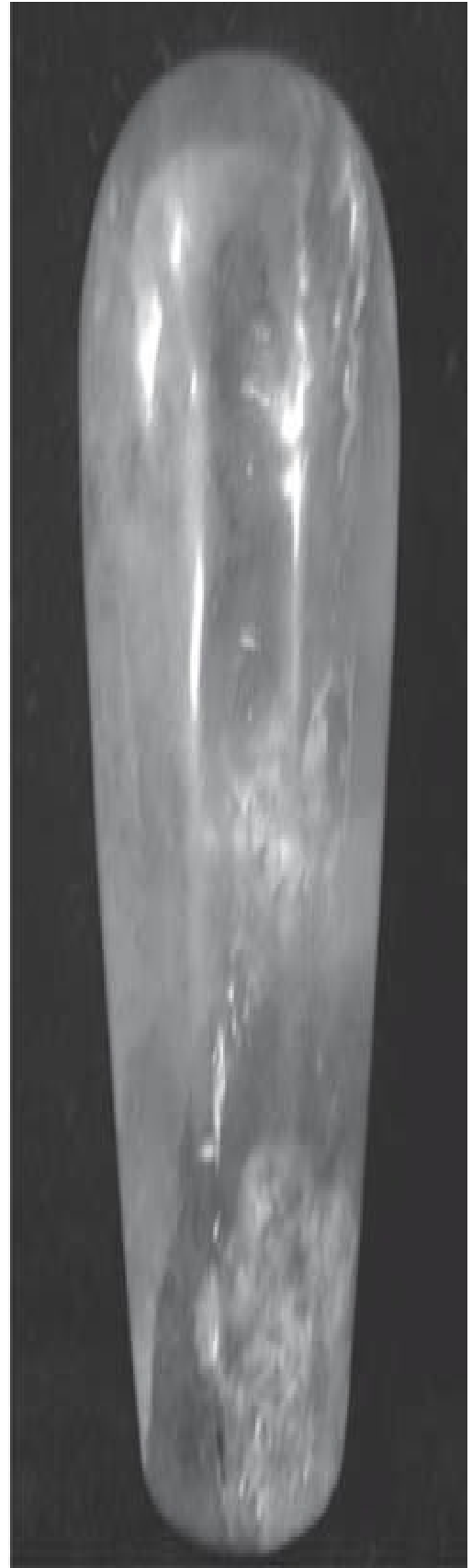
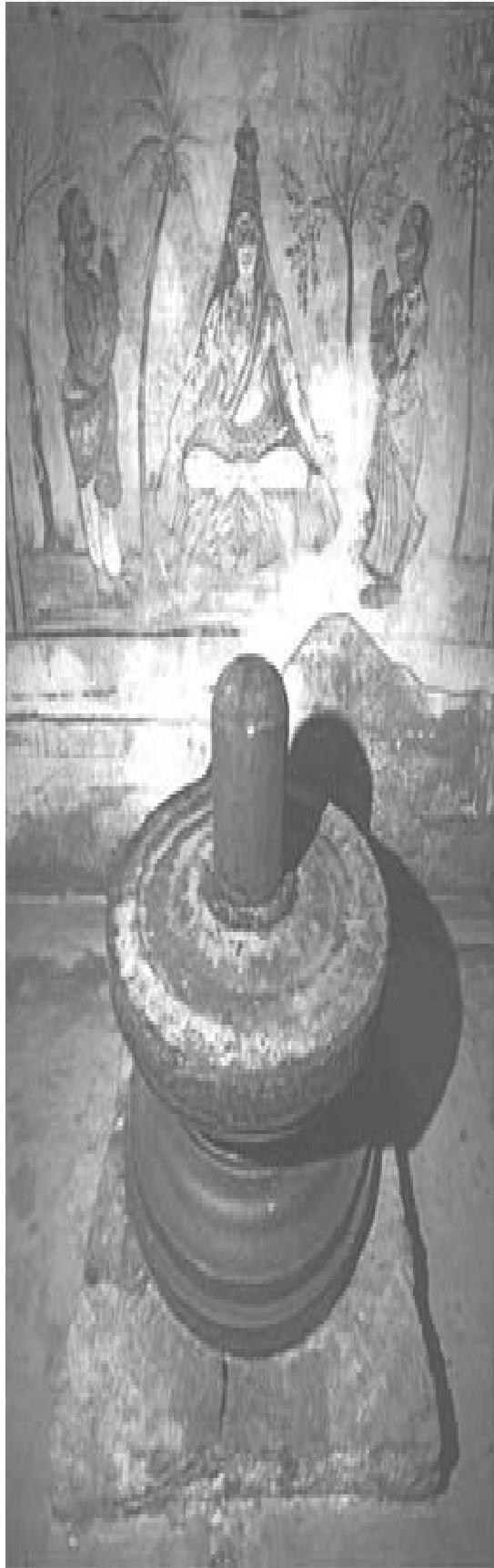
Nucleus of the Radiance

The key is the so-called Bnnt embryo, which Reymond expressed in terms of “the nucleus of the radiance [which] remained on the ground . . . [and] illuminated the primeval waters.”³⁶ These are the same qualities as the Sound Eye, also mentioned in the Edfu texts, which she saw as “the center of the light that illumines the island,”³⁷ implying perhaps that both the sun god Re, shining out from the lotus, and the Sound Eye were one and the same. On the other hand, it is possible that the fall of the Sound Eye is in fact another metaphor for the comet that caused the cataclysm which brought to a close the second phase of activity on the island.

The Egyptian word bnnt is a feminized form of the masculine bnn, a word linked to the root bnb, or Benben (or bnb), which we know means either “to copulate, to beget, to be begotten, virile, phallus,”³⁸ or weben, “to shine.”³⁹ Whichever is right (and both could be correct), then it is possible that the object at the heart of the Underworld of the Soul was envisaged as a power object emitting some kind of divine radiance, perhaps thought to be of extra-terrestrial origin, and symbolizing first creation, just like the object with “fire about it” alluded to in the Coffin Texts and the bell-shaped object of the Am-duat text. Whether this was a meteorite or an object in the shape of one will probably never be known.

The Process of Creation

The closest concept to which we can compare the bnnt in comparative religions is the lingam (or linga) of Hindu tradition. These are elliptical stones of varying sizes, sacred to the god Shiva (or Siva), which have been venerated in India for several thousand years. The name lingam means a “mark,” “sign,” or “phallus,” even though such stones are not exclusively male objects.



19. and 20. Two examples of lingams. Left, one from the Tanjore temple, Tamil Nadu, with a painting of the god Shiva in the background; and right, a rock crystal variant from Cambodia's Pre-Khmer period, c. 6th to 7th century AD.

Lingams can be abstract forms of the goddess Uma (or Parvati, Shiva's wife), who personifies Mount Kailas, the sacred mountain of creation in what is today Tibet. Usually, lingams are stones that are either river worn or specially carved for the purpose. They can also be made of precious gems, crystal, wood, and even ice. Lingams are generally placed in a temple's womblike inner sanctum or shrine and are unquestionably the Hindu equivalent of the Greek and Egyptian omphali, and the baetyls found among the civilizations of the Levant and Near East. A good example of a lingam is the one revered in the rock-cut temple of Shiva and Parvati, located on a hill in Elephanta, a small island in the Arabian Sea off the coast of Mumbai (Bombay), India. It is described by German Orientalist Dr. Heinrich Zimmer in his book *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilisation*:

The central sanctuary of this extensive temple is a simple, monumental, square shrine, with four entrances on the four sides, each guarded by a pair of divine door-keepers. Within is the austere symbol of the lingam, emanating to the four quarters its all-productive energy. This lingam, as the main stone image, forms the center of the innermost cella, the holy of holies or "womb house" (garbhagriha). In the innermost recess of the organism of the temple it serenely stands, constituting the life-center of the subterranean cave.⁴⁰

The lingam of Elephanta, which is conical and of substantial size, is located in a womblike chamber within a subterranean cave that forms part of a hilltop temple complex on the sacred island. Immense cosmic symbolism is reflected in this layout, reminding us of the Edfu account's description of the Bnnt embryo inside the Island of the Egg (or, indeed, the Benben stone inside the Shetayet, or Mansion of Sokar). Thus, on Elephanta Island, we have a near perfect example of what might once have constituted Egypt's mythical first temple, which also

grew up around an island constituting the place of first creation.

It has been suggested that a lingam contains “the soul-seed within which lies the essence of the entire cosmos.”⁴¹ This beautifully describes the function of not only the Bnnt embryo of the Edfu texts but also the object with fire about it alluded to in the Coffin Texts and the bell-shaped object represented in the Fifth Hour of the Am-duat text.

The importance of such power objects may seem difficult to understand in this day and age. However, among indigenous cultures worldwide, their placement at sites of great spiritual potency was seen as much more than simply a suitable setting for a holy relic. Lingams in particular were thought to bring new life, fertility, and regeneration to those communities that came within their sphere of influence. The removal of such objects—as was ably demonstrated in the blockbuster movie *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984), which featured the theft of a sacred lingam—meant the immediate cessation of normal life processes, leading eventually to death, despair, and the onset of decay unless the object was returned to its rightful resting place.

The Womb Chamber

From these ideas we can be pretty certain that the Underworld of the Soul within Egypt's island of creation was conceived of as a womblike structure of the sort imagined by prehistorian Marija Gimbutas as existing in the deepest part of natural caves. As we saw in chapter six, she proposed that in the prehistoric mindset, caves came to symbolize the birth canal and womb of a primordial goddess of death and regeneration.⁴² Moreover, Gimbutas suspected that these cave wombs were replicated in Europe by our Neolithic ancestors c. 5500-3500 BC with the construction of beehivelike chambers inside stone and earthen monuments, such as passage graves, long barrows, and subterranean caves, like the one on Mumbai's Elephanta Island.

Did a similar structure once exist on the edge of the Nile flood plains somewhere near Giza? Did it contain a power object resembling a lingam and remembered as the Bnnt embryo or Benben stone? Had this structure been revered even before the end of the Pleistocene epoch? Was its initial phase of construction brought to a close by the cataclysmic events that came in the aftermath of a comet fragmentation above North America c. 11,000 BC, signaling the end of a mythical age remembered by the first Egyptians as Zep Tepi, the First Occasion? There is a good case to suggest that the answer to all these questions is, unequivocally, yes.

A Primeval Well

If such a structure did once exist in the vicinity of Giza's famous pyramid field, then where was its entrance? The Edfu records provide an important clue. They allude to the Underworld of the Soul under the alternative name bw-hnm,⁴³ which Reymond reasoned meant the "place [bw] of the well,"⁴⁴ since the word hnm can mean "well, cistern."⁴⁵ However, the root hnm can also mean "to construct," as in to build or bring together.⁴⁶ Thus bw-hnm has connotations of a built structure underground, a "primeval well," which Reymond felt was the source of origin of the creative powers at the heart of the sacred domain.⁴⁷ She even suggested that this well could be a place of "still water within the island" or where "the subterranean water welled out."⁴⁸

The Edfu texts tell us that the power objects called the iht relics, used by the Shebtiw, Wa and 'Aa, in their sacred spells to repel the waters, were most likely stored in the bw-hnm, which was apparently located "underneath" a willow.⁴⁹ In this respect, Reymond remarked, "The picture of a willow standing near a well gives a clear idea of a primitive sacred place as it might once have existed in Egypt."⁵⁰

Willows were sacred to Osiris, since, in one late version of his death and resurrection, a tree of this type was said to have grown up around his coffin, after it was washed ashore. Willow groves also grew where parts of his body were said to have rested after his carcass had been dismembered by his evil brother, Set. It makes sense to assume that willows also grew close to his tomb situated within the primeval mound. Might the Place of the Well really exist? Could it be found today?

When I first wrote about the Edfu building texts in my book *Gods of Eden*, published in 1998,⁵¹ there were no ready answers to these questions. Yet, for me,

they would initiate a historical quest that, in the months and years to come, would culminate in the discovery of what can only be described as the best candidate by far for the Place of the Well.

9

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Place of the Well

Did the Place of the Well, an apparent entrance to the Underworld of the Soul, Giza's subterranean world, really exist? Inspired by the conviction that it did, I started to make enquiries toward the end of 1998 and was eventually able to establish that a primeval well of some note was once to be found in Nazlet el-Samman, the thriving village beyond the eastern edge of the Giza plateau. The only other information I could find was that it had been sacred to a sidi (a Sufi "master" or "lord") named Hamid el-Samman (or es-Semmen), who I was told had lived in a "cave" somewhere on the plateau.¹ There was nothing about the well being the entrance to any kind of lost underworld, and I was unable to confirm whether it existed today.

Six years were to pass before I obtained the next piece of the puzzle. It came, finally, via a strange set of circumstances on a research trip to Egypt in May 2005. For reasons that shall become apparent later in the book, my wife Sue and I visited the ruined sun temple of the Fifth-Dynasty king Userkaf in Abu Ghurob, a site near the pyramid field of Abusir, located some seven miles (11 km) south of the Great Pyramid. Yet, because the site was closed to tourists, the only way of getting there was along the edge of the Libyan Desert, either by camel or on horseback. So I made the foolhardy decision to hire horses and ride out to the ruin—this being despite the fact that I had never ridden a horse before in my life! The next day, the journey began, and after almost falling off the beast as it sped wildly across the sandy wastes, we finally reached our destination. Bouncing up and down on the saddle had, however, put my back out, and so I asked our driver and guide, Hussein el-Mor, if he knew a chiropractor or osteopath locally who could put it right. He said he did, and so took us to see a local exporter of perfumes named Ali el-Samman, a family friend of his since childhood. Apparently, this man could help me.

After correcting my back as best he could, Ali extended his hospitality by providing us with sweet tea and Coca Cola. The subject of conversation then turned, as it does, to the Pyramids and their mysteries. On being asked whether he believed any major discoveries were still to be made, Ali revealed that beneath the village of Nazlet el-Samman was an underground “city” or “palace.” I asked him to tell me more, and he said that this forgotten realm was accessed via a cave tunnel in a sacred well dedicated to the holy man Hamid el-Samman.

Such tales are two a penny, but I sensed that Ali was alluding here to Giza’s subterranean domain, which instead of being seen as a chamber of first creation, or the tomb of Sokar-Osiris, had been transformed into a lost city, a palace, filled with gold and treasure. If so, then here was confirmation at last that the well of Hamid el-Samman was linked in local tradition with a lost underworld, which Ali clearly believed existed beneath the village, that is, beyond the edge of the pyramid field. Moreover, Ali saw Hamid el-Samman not just as the site’s spiritual guardian but also as the keeper of its great secret.

I asked him whether the well existed today.

“Of course,” Ali confirmed.

Could he tell me where it was?

“It is in the Muslim cemetery south of the Sphinx,” he revealed, matter of factly. “It is beneath ancient gomez—sycamores—descendents of those that were here when the pharaohs ruled Egypt.”

My next question was inevitable—was it possible to visit the well?

Although the cemetery is strictly out of bounds to non-Muslims, Ali and Hussein agreed that it was possible to go there, even though this would mean slipping past the “secret police” that hang around the Sphinx entrance on the western edge of the village.

It was a plan, and one that we agreed to attempt the following day, with Hussein acting as our go-between.

Before leaving, I asked Ali whether knowledge of the well, especially as an entrance into an underground “city,” was widely known. Ali replied that it was not (even Hussein knew nothing about it, although he was aware of the well), as only a handful of people were privy to this information. Ali then revealed another bombshell, for it seemed that he himself was a descendent of Sidi Hamid el-Samman, hence his surname, the reason why he knew so much about the well and its secret.

I was amazed. Had we just discovered the Place of the Well—the legendary entrance to the Underworld of the Soul and perhaps even Cayce’s Hall of Records?

Cemetery of the Crow

The following morning we met Hussein at the hotel and made our way by taxi to the heart of Nazlet el-Samman, alive as ever with villagers going about their daily business. Cars honked their horns as horses, carts, and camels attempted to navigate the narrow, dusty streets amid a constant din that never seems to cease. Leaving the vehicle, Hussein primed us to expect trouble if the plan went wrong, for there was a high risk that matters could get out of hand (indeed, after emerging from the cemetery, Hussein was taken away for questioning by a plainclothes policeman and asked to explain where he had gone with us).

Accepting Hussein's word, we purchased tickets to enter the plateau, before slipping away from the crowds and making our way across to the cemetery, its gate guarded by local men in traditional galabeya and head scarves. Careful words with them gave us the green light to advance through the avenues of white-washed box tombs toward the well, which was surrounded by a small grove of sycamore fig trees (gomez, in Egyptian Arabic) as well as two or three fully grown date palms.

Upon arrival, we saw in front of us a low, circular wall concealing the deep artesian well, which seemed to descend into the bedrock for a depth of perhaps twenty feet (6 meters) before reaching the water level. An old plastic bucket tied to the end of a nylon rope was used by a child to draw water, which was drunk by those who had gathered to witness this unusual spectacle of Westerners gazing into the depths of a well, located just 250 yards (230 meters) south of the Sphinx monument.

Whether the well concealed the entrance to a tunnel leading away to some underground "city" was beyond the scope of this unplanned and somewhat tense visit. The sycamore fig trees that offered the well shade were not the largest in

the vicinity, either. Another, of even greater girth, lay slightly to the south, while the presence nearby of date palms gave the site the feel of an oasis of the sort that would have been important to any local community in the past.

The cemetery itself, I found later, is known as Aish el-Ghurob (meaning, curiously, the “bread of the crow” or perhaps the “nest” or “seat” of the crow). On its eastern side is a separate Coptic Christian cemetery, abutting which is a curious architectural feature known as the Wall of the Crow (Heit el-Ghurob), situated approximately 160 yards (150 meters) from the well. This monumental structure consists of a 656-foot-long (200 meter) wall, or causeway, that is more than 33 feet (10 meters) in height and width, with a gateway about halfway along its course, topped by enormous lintels of limestone. At 7.6 feet (2.3 meters) in width and nearly 23 feet (7 meters) in height, this gateway acts as an impressive entry point onto the plateau if approaching from the south, that is, the direction of Memphis, the capital of Upper and Lower Egypt during the Pyramid Age.

The Wall of the Crow is thought to have been built toward the end of the Fourth Dynasty (c. 2500 BC) and lies on even earlier evidence of settlement activity in the area. No one knows its precise function, although it is likely to have been the plateau’s southern perimeter wall and may have acted as a defensive dike against flash floods, running down from the northwest along a gully known as the Central Wadi. The wall also marked the boundary of the so-called workers’ village, or “city of the pyramids,” uncovered immediately to its south by Dr. Mark Lehner and the Ancient Egypt Research Associates (AERA) team. Neither cemetery appears to be any more than one hundred years old. Yet, in this time, both have expanded to cover an area the size of six soccer fields.

The location’s ominous appellation honoring the ghurob, or crow, reflects the area’s age-old associations with death and mortality, since the bird is seen in Arab-Egyptian folklore as an omen of death. So powerful is this belief locally that Hussein told me that if he encounters a crow on his way to work, then he will return home and not drive again until the following day. The crow is a

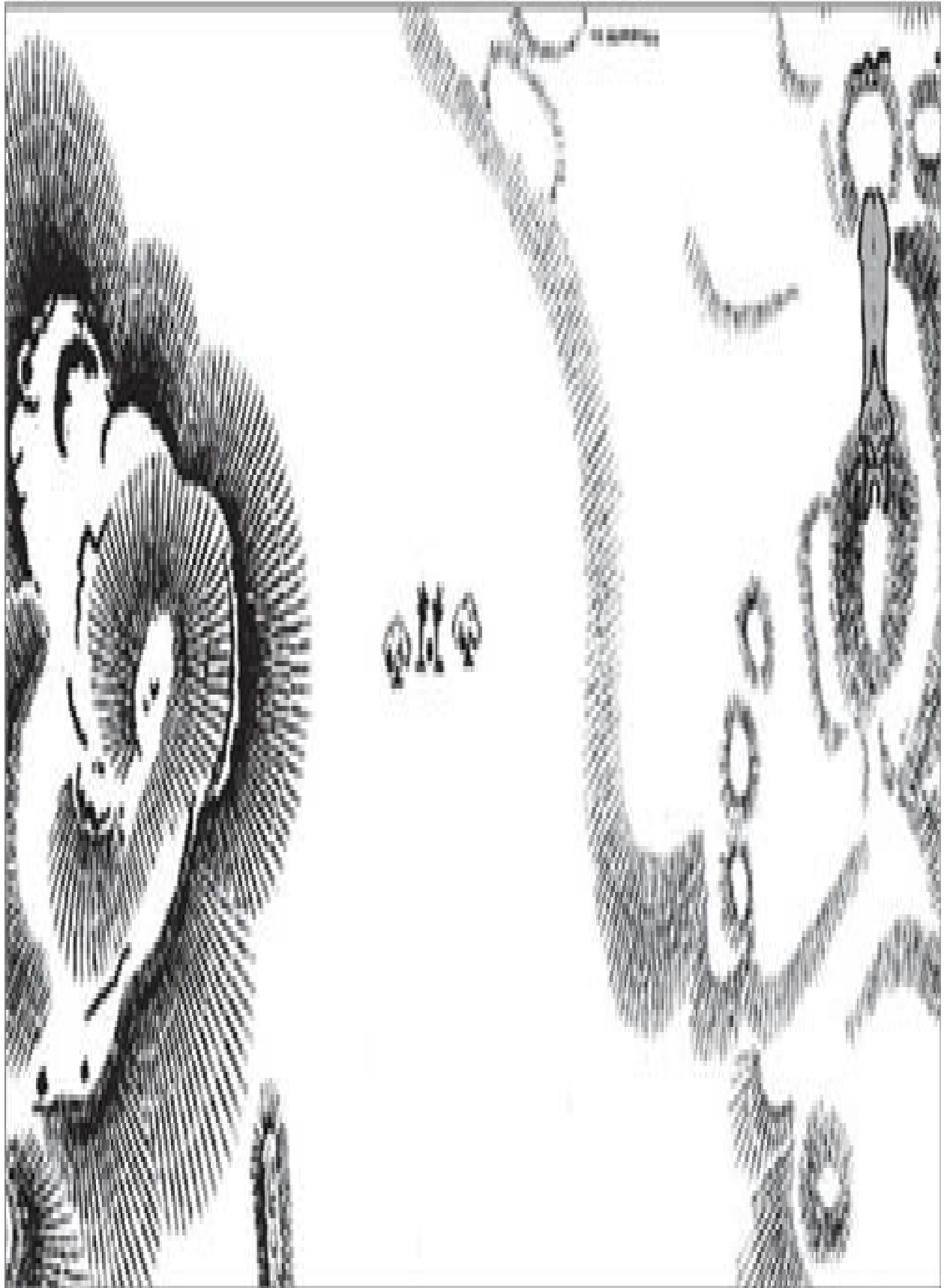
common visitor to the trees that shelter the two cemeteries, its eerie caw ever present in this quiet corner of the plateau.

From Egypt's Old Kingdom through to Roman times, burials and offerings were deposited in the vicinity of the Wall of the Crow. Even the current cemetery sprang up in the early twentieth century, following requests by local sheikhs to be interred here. Why exactly they might have chosen such a location is unclear, although the decision was probably connected with the popularity of Sidi Hamid el-Samman. Annual festivals were held here in his honor until the modern era, when they were suppressed following the erection of a high concrete-and-steel wall that now blocks off the Muslim cemetery and sycamore grove from the rest of the plateau.

A Sufi Connection

Hussein's father told me that during these celebrations, which took place around midsummer each year, hundreds of local people would gather to celebrate the saint with music, song, and dance. Much smaller celebrations known as zikr, a devotional dance with musical accompaniment, would take place every Friday in and around the holy man's "tomb," or "cave," situated in a gulley southeast of the Second Pyramid.² In actuality, the original purpose of this tomb was to house the earthly remains of one Debhen, an important official of Menkaure, the builder of the Third Pyramid, who reigned c. 2500 BC. Members of the local Sufi community still hold that it was here that Hamid el-Samman, in his role as physician and healer, received the sick and lame.

Sidi Hamid el-Samman, who would seem to have been alive when Napoleon marched triumphantly into Egypt at the head of the French army in 1798, is said to have sat by the well, which today bears the name Bir el-Samman, meaning the "well of the Samman" (or occasionally, Bir Hamid, the "well of Hamid"). Thus any legends concerning the well shaft being an entrance to some kind of underground domain must, presumably, predate his life by many hundreds, if not thousands, of years. In fact, over the centuries, the saint's memory has almost certainly fused together with earlier traditions regarding a guardian figure associated with the well, leading to the creation of a composite character remembered today under the name Hamid el-Samman. This was confirmed to me by one local Sufi from Nazlet el-Samman who told me that Sidi Hamid el-Samman was the last of a long line of holy men who had each borne the same name.



21. Section of the plan of the Giza plateau by Karl Lepsius, published c. 1849, showing the well Bir el-Samman between palms and sycamores. To the south is Gebel Gibli, and to the north is the Sphinx.

To my knowledge, nothing has been written about the life of Hamid el-Samman, which is a shame, as he is believed to have been a keeper of the secret of the well, making him an important figure in this investigation. His presence on the plateau may suggest a long-lost Sufi interest in the mysteries of its hidden underworld, one that I suspect goes back to the celebrated Sufi master Dhu'l-Nun al-Misri (AD 796-859), who is known to have died in Giza. Born in Akhmin in Middle Egypt, he was also an alchemist, theurgist, and hermeticist who would have taken a great interest in the knowledge that Hermes Trismegistus, the legendary founder of the hermetic tradition, is said to have been buried in a cave-tomb somewhere in the vicinity of either the Great Pyramid or Second Pyramid. According to Arabic legend, he sits on a throne and holds in his hands the fabled Emerald Tablet, on which is written the well-known hermetic text of the same name. With him also is a work entitled the "Book of Causes," on the cover of which is written: "Here is the secret of creation and the science of the causes of all things."³

A Tunnel to the Sphinx?

Later in our investigations, I would discover a legend that speaks of a passage at the base of the well shaft which links with another well in the Valley Temple of Khafre,⁴ located southeast of the Sphinx enclosure, not far from the monument's right paw. Close to the building's northeast entrance, a dry well shaft can indeed be seen. It was within this shaft that in 1860 the French Egyptologist August Mariette discovered an amazing diorite statue of the pharaoh Khafre, builder of the Second Pyramid.

Although the presence of this tunnel is impossible to verify and might easily be based on misheard rumors, it brought to mind the readings of Edgar Cayce. These speak of an entrance to the Hall of Records somewhere in the vicinity of the Sphinx's right paw, the reason for so much interest in this area over the past six decades by scientific teams and, of course, the Association for Research and Enlightenment. Even though the readings concerning the Hall of Records focus mainly on the Sphinx monument and its surrounding enclosure, there are clues that Cayce's unconscious mind may also have been picking up on the importance of the well Bir el-Samman.

The Story of the Life Seal

During childhood, Edgar Cayce would experience a recurring dream. He would find himself in a desert environment, and before him would be “an oasis with a well and three palm trees.” According to Cayce’s son Hugh Lynn, writing in 1937, the dream sometimes featured his father:

. . . traveling with companions across the desert and after apparent hardships and suffering reaching the oasis. At other times more details seem to unfold regarding events that took place after reaching the oasis. After each experience Mr. Cayce awoke with a vivid mental picture of the three palm trees around a well.⁵

There had been no clear indication where the well with palm trees might have been located, although following one reading in 1924 concerning a past life experienced by Cayce in Persia, there was some suggestion that it might have been located here.⁶ That same year, following another reading (which one is sadly not recorded), Cayce had awoken with a “vivid mental image” consisting of a “circle about a triangle, with a boat to the left and three swans to the right and within the triangle an oasis scene with a well and three palm trees. EC [Cayce] sketched this on paper at once.”⁷

The drawing made by Cayce, along with a copy made in 1926, became the basis of the psychic’s own “life seal” (see figure 22 and plate 4), a kind of etheric “coat of arms,” expressing “in symbol form the standards and principles of the individual” retained across lives.⁸ In time, a radiant Calvary cross was added to the base of Cayce’s life seal, while the triangle came to be interpreted as the Great Pyramid, and thus representative of Cayce’s Egyptian life as the high priest Ra-Ta.



GAYCE

22. Early drawing of Edgar Cayce's "life seal," based on imagery experienced by him during a sleep-induced reading in 1924. The well and three palm trees were glimpsed originally in a recurring dream experienced by Cayce during childhood.

This same connection between the Great Pyramid and the well is displayed also in some examples of an extended form of the life seal known as the "aura chart," which is thought to embody even more information about its owner.⁹ For instance, an aura chart done for Gertrude Cayce, Edgar's wife, that hangs in the offices of the A.R.E. in Virginia Beach, shows the well and three palm trees in a desert terrain with the Great Pyramid in the background (see plate 5). What is so strange about this image is that it matches very well the perspective of the well Bir el-Samman against a backdrop of the Great Pyramid, almost as if the artist responsible for painting the aura chart had been to the well, which, in the 1930s, would still have been accessible to visitors.

So the question must be—was Cayce's recurring dream about the well with palm trees, along with the subsequent dream vision of the life seal, an allusion to Bir el-Samman, which is shaded not only by a small grove of sycamore trees but also by date palms?

It was in July 1925, just over a year after Cayce first glimpsed his life seal, that his readings began mentioning the Sphinx monument relative to the existence of the Egyptian Hall of Records. I find the proximity of these dates coincidental, to say the least. Is it possible that the entry into Cayce's conscious mind of the life seal, with its key symbolism, was meant as a prelude to the emergence shortly afterward of his initial readings concerning the Hall of Records? Remember, the hall's perceived entrance, by the right paw of the Sphinx, is just a short distance away from the well in the cemetery. Once again, Cayce seems to have been in tune with a very real level of psychic activity concerning the presence beneath the plateau of Giza's lost underworld. If this was the case, then what are we to make of the other components of Cayce's life seal—the three swans and the boat

on the water? Clearly, the boat might easily allude to the journey of the soul of the deceased into the hereafter. Yet what about the swans—what might they represent? It is a matter we shall return to in due course.

Abode of the Tree Goddess

The powerful connection between the sycamore grove containing the well Bir el-Samman and the cult of death is evidenced by a legend, recounted even today by the more superstitious members of the local community. It features Hathor, the ancient Egyptian goddess of joy, dance, music, and the afterlife, who was represented either as the Heavenly Cow or as a woman wearing cow's horns with the solar disk between them. According to what is told, Hathor comes to the Aish el-Ghurob cemetery to feast on the blood of the dead, which she does by eating the crimson fruit of the sycamore fig trees that surround the well.¹⁰

The sycamore trees in Aish el-Ghurob feature also in another legend, which might preserve traces of a local fertility cult. Arab-Egyptian women having difficulties conceiving would come to the well and eat the fruit of the trees in the hope of becoming pregnant.¹¹ Arguably, it is the fig's resemblance to the female genitalia that is behind this folk custom, observed originally in the name of Hathor in her guise as goddess of fertility and childbirth.

In fact, there is every likelihood that the grove of sycamore fig trees (Latin name *Ficus sycomorus*, not to be confused with the American or Eurasian sycamore) surrounding the well was seen as Hathor's abode, since she is a tree goddess par excellence and bears the title "Mistress of the Sycamore" or "Mistress of the Southern Sycamore." Hathor is often shown standing within a sycamore tree, beneath which is a well. Its waters are offered by the goddess in the form of a libation so that the deceased, shown in the form of a human-headed bird, might quench his thirst before entering the underworld. The tree's crimson fruit plays a similar role in that it replenishes the soul in the hereafter.¹² Sycamore trees were seen as proof of the presence nearby of water, usually in the form of a spring-fed pool or well. It was for this reason that both the sycamore tree and the well became important symbols in the funerary customs of the ancient Egyptians.¹³

Ali Samman had been right in stating that the sycamores in the cemetery were most likely descendents of those that had existed here during pharaonic times. The so-called Inventory Stela, an inscribed stone block found during the nineteenth century in the ruins of a Late Period temple of Isis next to the Great Pyramid, contains an account of how Khufu supposedly made repairs to the Sphinx following a lightning strike. Its text speaks also of a “thunderbolt which stands in the place of the Sycamores, so named because of a great sycamore whose branches were struck when the Lord of Heaven descended upon the Place of Horem-akhet [Harmachis, in Greek],”¹⁴ a name applied to the Sphinx in its role as the god Horus (see chapter eleven).

Here, then, was a reference c. 500 BC to not only a large, lightning-struck sycamore in the vicinity of the Sphinx, but also a sycamore grove called the “place of the Sycamores,” which can only be an allusion to the forebears of the present examples in the Aish el-Ghurob cemetery. This was certainly the conclusion of Egyptologist Selim Hassan, who, in a record of his work in Giza during the 1936-37 season, wrote the following with respect to the contents of the Inventory Stela:

The mention of a great sycamore tree having also been struck is also of interest, for there is a similar tree, of immense age, still flourishing a little to the south of the Sphinx . . . It may well be the offshoot of the tree mentioned in the stela. It is also this “family” of trees that may have given to Hathor her title of “Mistress of the Sycamore,” a form under which she was extensively worshipped in this district.¹⁵

Whether or not Khufu did make repairs to the Sphinx, as the Inventory Stela implies, is a contentious issue, even though there is now mounting evidence that the human face of the leonine monument is that of Khufu and not, as has always been assumed, that of Khafre, one of his successors.¹⁶ As to the Sphinx’s age, this too remains unclear, with Egyptologists unwilling to accept that it predates the age of Khafre, c. 2550 BC. This said, it is possible that the leonine monument does predate even Khufu’s reign and was originally a recumbent lion,

not a human-headed sphinx, representing either an Aker lion or a form of the god Horus in his role as the cosmic lion (see chapter eleven). The relative proportions of the Sphinx's body, compared against the size of the head, does certainly indicate that the latter could have been recarved at some point after its original creation.

Mistress of the Southern Sycamore

Gazing into the dark depths of Giza's lost holy well, I attempted to contemplate its inner secrets. Was this the bw-hnm, the Place of the Well, alluded to as the entrance to the Underworld of the Soul in the Edfu texts? Certainly, there were no willow trees here, like the one said to have marked the bw-hnm, just sycamores and a few date palms.

A clue, however, to this conundrum is provided by the Edfu texts. Here we read that ancestral beings called the Falcons or Sages, whose leader was the nameless earth god, were "born of the Nbt cow on the wa'ret [waters] of Nun in her homeland by the Southern Sycamore. They came to land from the water."¹⁷ The Nbt cow means "lady cow" and is very likely a title of Hathor. As we have seen, her abode as the tree goddess was the Southern Sycamore, and generally it is assumed that this sacred tree was located in the temple complex attached to the city of Memphis, some ten miles (17 km) southeast of Giza. Yet Selim Hassan, as we have seen, suspected from the text of the Inventory Stela that the Southern Sycamore was perhaps a reference to the site of the sycamore grove immediately south of the Sphinx. Indeed, he later repeated this assertion, stating:

The title of Hathor, "Mistress of the Sycamore of the South," may refer to a local form of the Goddess, and is perhaps connected with the sycamore tree to the south of the Great Sphinx.¹⁸

In 1908 the American Egyptologist George A. Reisner was excavating amid the ruins of Menkaure's valley temple, situated at the end of the now-vanished causeway that ran down from the Third Pyramid, built c. 2500 BC. Here he unearthed a series of slate statues, each showing a group of three beautifully carved, life-size human figures. Central to all of them was Menkaure, shown in the company of the goddess Hathor, sporting huge, curved cow horns, with the

sun disk between them, and one of the goddesses personifying the individual nomes, or provinces, of Egypt (one triad group showed Menkaure with Hathor and his royal wife Khamerernebty II). The workmanship of these beautiful statues, which are now on display in the Boston Museum and the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, is extraordinary. Yet what is most significant about them are their inscriptions, since they refer to Hathor as “Mistress of the Sycamore,” showing that the title was in use even by this time.



23. The goddess Hathor shown amid a sycamore fig tree, offering libations to the deceased as shown in the Egyptian Book of the Dead (after Budge).

That Menkaure's valley temple was located immediately northwest of the present position of the Muslim cemetery and just 140 yards (130 meters) away from the sycamore grove containing the well Bir el-Samman seems beyond coincidence if it really was the abode of the tree goddess. Either Menkaure knew that the area was already sacred to Hathor as Mistress of the Sycamore, or the presence nearby of his valley temple inspired the planting of the sycamore grove in the first place. Either way, it argues persuasively for the tree goddess's connection with the sycamore grove, from the Pyramid Age to modern times—the reason why legends have come down to us that speak of Hathor still haunting Aish el-Ghurob.

If Menkaure did commission the triad group statues for his valley temple in the knowledge that an existing sycamore grove nearby was the abode of Hathor, then the well might easily predate his reign. Even if it is of more recent date, then its boring could have hit cave passages already present in the bedrock, making sense of the legend told to me by Ali el-Samman. All that can be confirmed is that the well appears on the earliest plans of the plateau, undertaken in the first half of the nineteenth century, while a sketch of the Second Pyramid executed by one of the savants, or learned men, that accompanied Napoleon into Egypt shows the site of the well in the foreground. It is hidden behind a low, broken wall, traces of which are still visible today (see figure 24).



24. One of the slate triads in the Egyptian Museum showing Menkaure, the builder of the Third Pyramid, in the company of Hathor, as Mistress of the Sycamore, and one of the goddesses of the nomes, or provinces, of Egypt. The statue was found in Menkaure's valley temple, close to Hathor's sycamore grove and the well Bir el-Samman.

“Mansion of the Ms-nht”

If the mythical Southern Sycamore was to be found in Giza, as Hassan suspected, then this becomes the most likely place where the Falcons and Sages of the Edfu records are said to have emerged from the primeval waters to play their role in the development of the island of creation. Remember, the bw-hnm, or “primeval well,” which allowed access to the Underworld of the Soul, was considered by Eve Reymond to be either the “still water within the island [of creation]” or the place where “the subterranean water welled out.”¹⁹

Even further evidence that the sycamore grove surrounding the well Bir el-Samman was close to the Homeland of the Primeval Ones is that one of the titles given in the Edfu texts to the mythical temple built next to the island of creation was “Mansion of Ms-nht.”²⁰ This may not seem relevant until one realizes that the nht element of the name is very likely the ancient Egyptian word nehet, meaning “tree,” and more particularly—the sycamore—since the Edfu account tells us that the mythical beings known as the Falcons or Sages emerged from the primeval waters of Nun in the Nbt cow’s homeland by the Southern Sycamore. This, then, becomes yet another clue to Giza’s role as Egypt’s original island of creation, for Hathor was both Nbt cow and Mistress of the Southern Sycamore, the mythical tree once located immediately south of the Sphinx.

With all of this in mind, the well Bir el-Samman becomes the most obvious candidate for the identity of the bw-hnm, the Place of the Well, as the entrance to the Underworld of the Soul. If correct, then where exactly was the island of creation, with its primeval mound? Had this also existed in Giza, and if so, where?

Sue and I continued to watch as more pails of water were raised from the well by

the young boy and quickly consumed by those present. Looking around at the extent of the cemetery, with its neat avenues of whitewashed box tombs, I moved across to the large sycamore, about forty paces to the south. I noted how close I was to the north face of a prominent rocky knoll, which lay no more than 120 yards (110 meters) south of our position. Called Gebel Gibli (or Gebel el-Qibli), meaning, simply, the “southern mount,” it now took on a special significance, especially since I knew that it had been proposed already as a possible site of Sokar’s Shetayet shrine.²¹



25. Drawing from 1798 showing the site of the well Bir el-Samman as seen from the south.

Yet, as is almost always the case in Giza, it is on the final day of a research trip that the greatest discoveries are made, and such was the case on this occasion. The next morning, Sue and I were due to fly back to the United Kingdom. It left me with a burning desire to find out more about Gebel Gibli. I would soon come to realize that this compelling pyramid mount, so much overlooked in the past, now provided the key to unlocking not just the evolution of Giza's famous pyramid field but also the true whereabouts of Giza's fabled lost underworld.

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Pyramid Precision

Back in the United Kingdom, with memories of the eventful research trip still firmly in my mind, I looked for information on Gebel Gibli, Giza's pyramid-like hill, which rises skyward from the plateau's southern edge. Somehow I sensed it was important to the rediscovery of the Underworld of the Soul, and to learn that the well Bir el-Samman was located beneath its northern face compelled me to investigate the matter further. Yet, to do this, Gebel Gibli now had to be understood in the context of its placement so close to the Giza Pyramids. Did it play some hitherto unknown role in the creation of the Giza monuments? What was the Pyramids' relationship to Egypt's original island of creation and primeval mound? To answer these questions, I had to go back to the drawing board and re-examine the evolution of the pyramid field, established at the height of Egypt's Old Kingdom period.



26. Aerial photograph of the Giza plateau taken in 1938 by Sergeant Geoffrey Grierson of the Royal Air Force. Note Gebel Gibli jutting out of the sand on the bottom left, next to which four sycamore trees mark the site of the well Bir el-Samman.

A Grand Design in Giza

There is a long-lasting air of mystery and imagination attached to the Pyramids of Giza, one that goes beyond seeing them simply as tombs, even though this was unquestionably their primary function. Just as mysterious is their relationship to one another. Why were only three major pyramids built on the plateau in Giza? Were they planned singly, one plot at a time, or could there have been other motivations involved?

Egyptologists are of the opinion that the Great Pyramid was the first to be built. Arguably, it was the final resting place of the pharaoh Khufu (Cheops, in Greek), who took the throne sometime around 2600 BC. The Great Pyramid was positioned close to the northeast edge of the plateau so that it might occupy the most prominent site available and provide easy access for stone to be brought from the limestone quarries to the south. In addition to this, a gigantic, stone causeway, built on the east side of the pyramid, allowed vessels from the Nile to offload stone quarried in other parts of Egypt. This included red granite from Aswan in the south, used in the construction of the King's Chamber, as well as hard, white limestone from the Tura hills, northeast of Memphis, cut and shaped to create the monument's highly polished facing blocks. These reflected the sunlight to give the Great Pyramid a shining radiance that must have been visible for miles around.

The Second Pyramid, built by the pharaoh Khafre (Chephren, in Greek; a son of Khufu who took the throne c. 2550 BC), was located where it is, southwest of the Great Pyramid, since its elevated position allowed for the construction of a slightly smaller structure that, despite its lesser size, still matched the height of its more illustrious neighbor. The Second Pyramid's location also allowed for the construction of another easterly running causeway, which ran down to the eastern edge of the plateau. More significantly, the Second Pyramid was positioned to command an uninterrupted view of the northern horizon, toward which the entrances of all three pyramids were aligned, in accordance with an

ancient, stellar-based religion, explored in Part Three of this book.

Similar considerations were quite naturally behind the placement—southwest of the Second Pyramid—of the Third Pyramid, built c. 2500 BC by the pharaoh Menkaure (Mycerinus, in Greek), a younger son of Khafre. Whereas the casing blocks for the Great Pyramid and Second Pyramid were of Tura limestone, those of the Third Pyramid were red granite for the lower courses and shining white limestone for the rest of the monument. This gave it a distinctive two-tone appearance, which made up for its slightly inferior height compared against its two preexisting neighbors.

Each of the three pyramids also had its own mortuary temple, built on the eastern side, which was connected by a roofed and enclosed causeway to a valley temple positioned next to a quay attached to a lake or canal that allowed access to the Nile. Thus the original intention would have been for the body of the pharaoh to have reached its valley temple by boat, following a symbolic crossing of the river, representing the passage from the land of the living to the western land of the dead. Here it would have undergone a series of funerary rites before being carried in procession along the covered causeway to the mortuary temple. Further rites of passage would then have taken place here before the pharaoh was finally laid to rest inside the pyramid constructed specifically for this purpose.

Egyptologists believe that no more smooth-faced pyramids were built on the plateau owing to a lack of available space, coupled with changing religious ideals and familial ties, which meant a return to pre-existing cemeteries elsewhere in the Memphite necropolis. All other pyramid complexes built through till the end of the Old Kingdom more or less mimicked the style and layout of those in Giza, even if individual pyramids were much simpler in design.

All these opinions on how the Giza pyramid field came into being and why

building ceased when it did have some merit. However, it has long been thought possible that some kind of unified plan might have determined the position of the three pyramids. It is a theory that has gained immense popularity in the past thirty years, and for better or worse, such views have opened the floodgates to all manner of wild ideas regarding a grand design in Giza, featuring not just the main pyramids, but also the six remaining satellite pyramids, the Sphinx, the enclosure walls surrounding the pyramids, and even the mortuary and valley temples. Lines and circles are seen to crisscross the plateau in a melee of confusing patterns, from Fibonacci spirals to twelve-sided star clocks and occult pentagrams. Some of these theories stretch the imagination to the limit and quite simply muddy the waters instead of answering the basic question about whether a unified plan was behind the establishment of the pyramid field.

Back to Basics

For me, none of this had been helpful in understanding what awaited discovery beneath the bedrock of Giza, which I strongly suspected was reflected somehow in the placement of key monuments on the plateau, most obviously the three major pyramids and Sphinx monument. For this, I needed to get back to basics and start again from scratch to see what might be uncovered. To this end, I called upon the assistance of British chartered engineer Rodney Hale, a resourceful and objective researcher working in the field of ancient and more modern mysteries. He agreed to search for a possible relationship between the pyramid field's key monuments without consulting any previous attempts to do the same. In this way we could cast a fresh eye over the resulting data and see whether an overall picture might begin to emerge.

To conduct a basic geometrical survey of the Giza pyramid field, Hale first sought out the most accurate plan of the plateau. This remains the one initiated in 1986 by the Giza Plateau Mapping Project (GPMP), under the direction of Mark Lehner. Using the GPMP grid plan, checked against raw data derived from a full survey of the Giza Pyramids conducted in 1880-81 by British Egyptologist Sir William M. Flinders Petrie (1853-1942), Hale quickly detected an apparent relationship between the Great Pyramid and Third Pyramid. He found that a previously unknown equilateral triangle can be drawn locking in their apexes with the summit of Gebel Gibli. Each side of the triangle, which overlays a greater part of the plateau southeast of the Giza Pyramids, is 1024 yards (936.2 meters) in length (see figure 27).



27. Plan of the Giza plateau showing the perfect equilateral triangle linking the Great Pyramid and Third Pyramid with the summit of Gebel Gibli.

Attempting to recreate the same triangle by flipping it onto the northwest side of the pyramids simply does not work, since it would mean that the third corner falls on a descending slope well beyond the plateau's northern edge. It is a position without any obvious archaeological value or advantage for use in triangulation. In contrast, Gebel Gibli, which juts out of the sand some 197 feet (60 meters) above sea level, with its summit approximately 131 feet (40 meters) above the Islamic cemetery, is arguably the best place on the plateau to view the entire pyramid field. Indeed, the GPMP began its own triangulation from this very spot, as is recorded by Lehner:

We started at the top of el-Gebel el-Qibli, the prominent knoll of the Maadi Formation overlooking the wide central wadi . . . south of the Sphinx . . . [E]-Gebel el-Qibli is an ideal station for triangulation (the positioning of a point from two or more previously positioned points) and offers a magnificent visual survey of the entire pyramids plateau.¹ [Emphasis in the original.]

That Mark Lehner and his colleagues chose to begin their own triangulation of the plateau from Gebel Gibli tells us that the Pyramid Builders most likely came here for exactly the same reason. Rodney Hale's equilateral triangle, which fixes the visual extent of the pyramids as viewed from Gebel Gibli, makes this pretty certain. One can almost imagine ancient Egyptian surveyors making the journey to the summit of Gebel Gibli and here using primitive tools to triangulate the plateau prior to the construction of its three major pyramids.

Triangulation is an essential feature of all architectural planning and forms part of a much larger subject known as trigonometry. This is the study of the properties of triangles, with the word coming from the Greek trigonon (triangle)

and met'ron (measure). All the mathematical proportions, dimensions, and ratios featured in trigonometry are thought to derive from the process of divine creation, lending weight to Giza's triangular geometry being more than simply a happy coincidence. Although the invention of trigonometry is accredited to the school of Pythagoras, the celebrated Greek philosopher and mathematician who lived in the sixth century BC, there is every reason to believe that its principles were known to earlier civilizations, such as the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians.

The Apex Circle

Yet we needed more than simply an equilateral triangle to reveal any underlying geometry in Giza, especially as there was nothing to connect it with the Second Pyramid. This pyramid lies almost exactly midway between its two neighbors—the Great Pyramid and the Third Pyramid—yet it sits very slightly northwest of the imaginary line linking their apexes.

Hale now examined the perceived offset between the three Giza pyramids and determined that their apexes create the arc of an invisible circle with a center point exactly 1.47 miles (2360 meters) southeast of the Second Pyramid (see figure 28). When traced on a map, this center point was found to fall in an agricultural field some 230 yards (210 meters) southwest of the cemetery of Kafr el-Gebel, which we have already encountered in connection with the search for the Shetayet of Sokar. This seemed beyond coincidence—the only other place outside the pyramid field considered as a possible site of the Shetayet, the tomb of Osiris, we now found marked the very spot toward which the Giza pyramids appeared to bow in a graceful arc. Was it possible that the Shetayet and thus the island of creation and the Underworld of the Soul were located in this vicinity somewhere?

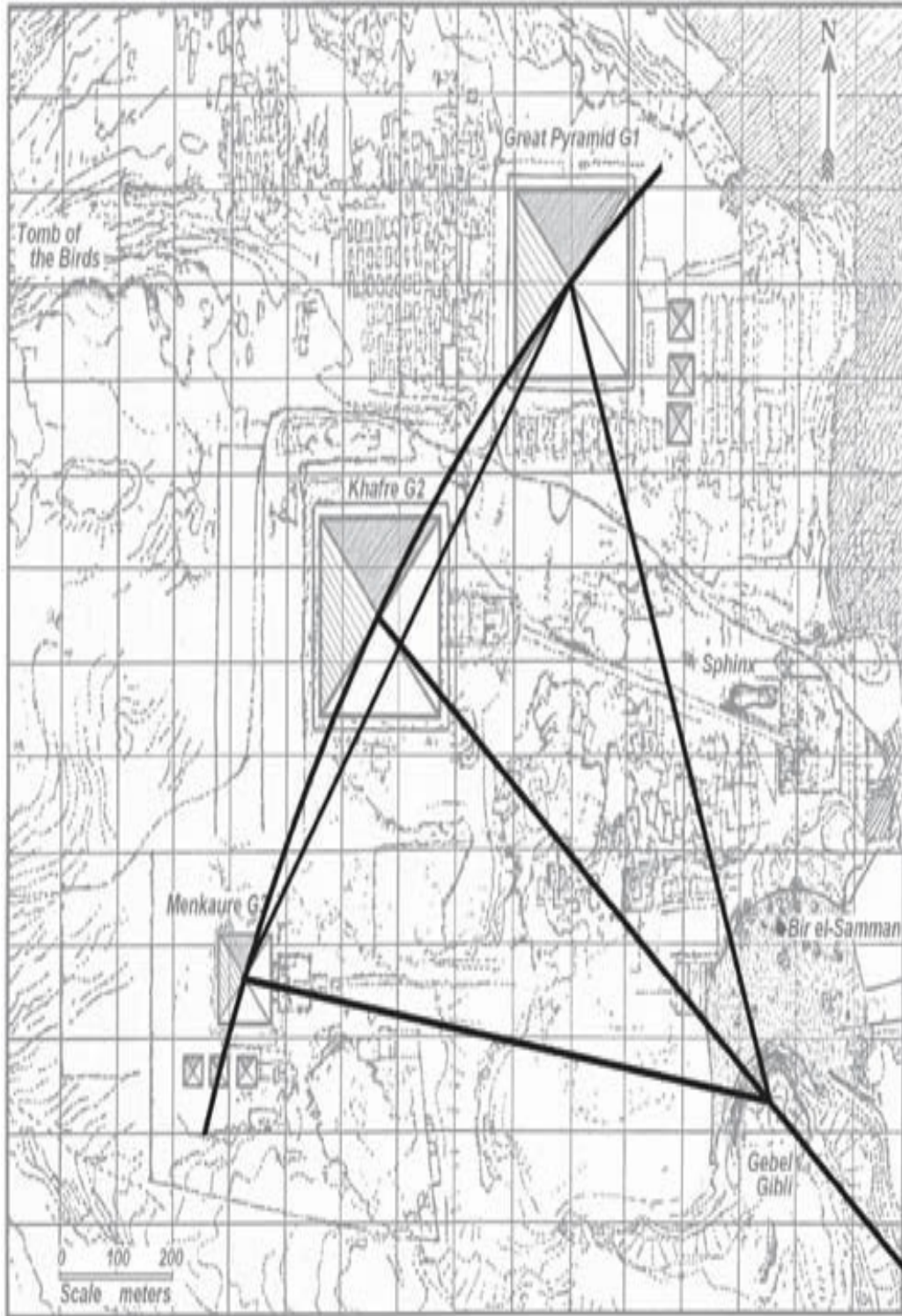


2360 m.

28. Plan of the Giza plateau showing the perfect curve made by the apexes of the three pyramids, bringing to light a center point 1.47 miles (2360 meters) away in the vicinity of the Kafr el-Gebel cemetery, the probable site of Upper Rostau.

Although there were now reasons to suspect that something of immense importance was going on in Kafr el-Gebel during the Pyramid Age, so much so that it influenced the positioning of the Giza Pyramids, I remained convinced that the Underworld of the Soul was located somewhere beneath the plateau.

Extending the Giza geometry still further, Rodney found that the center of the pyramid apex circle, focused on Kafr el-Gebel, does more than simply mark the imaginary position toward which the Giza Pyramids appear to honor. To begin with, he discovered that a sight line drawn from the center of the pyramid apex circle in Kafr el-Gebel through the summit of Gebel Gibli hits the apex of the Second Pyramid—all three sites are in near perfect alignment. But even more extraordinary is that this sight line bisects within half a degree the aforementioned equilateral triangle (see figure 29).² None of this was likely to be coincidence, adding weight to the theory that a unified plan was employed in the positioning of the Giza Pyramids.



2360 m.

29. Giza plan showing the sight line from the center of the apex circle to the Second Pyramid via Gebel Gibli, overlaid upon the equilateral triangle.

The Datum Line

Rodney Hale looked next at Gebel Gibli and realized that due north of its summit, at a distance of 470 yards (430 meters), was the east-facing head of the Sphinx monument. This north-south relationship along the eastern edge of the plateau offered the possibility of a surveyor's datum line, used since ancient times to create a reference for the organization of form and space into a pattern.

If the landscape geometry discerned in Giza should prove meaningful, then any datum line would most likely have played a role in the pyramid field's underlying geometry. This turned out to be so, for as a north-south base line, it becomes one side of a precise 3:4:5 Pythagorean triangle (see figure 30), with its east-west line passing through the apex of the Great Pyramid and reaching at its farthest point an enigmatic site we shall call the Tomb of the Birds,³ explored in chapter fifteen. The hypotenuse (longest side) of this 3:4:5 triangle aligns the proximity of the Tomb of the Birds with the apex of the Second Pyramid and the summit of Gebel Gibli, and coincides within one degree of the line that both bisects the aforementioned equilateral triangle and locks in the Second Pyramid with the center of the Pyramid apex circle in Kafr el-Gebel (see figure 31).⁴



30. Plan of the Giza plateau showing a 3:4:5 Pythagorean triangle overlay.

Music of the Spheres

Like the basic tenets of trigonometry, the concept of Pythagorean triangles is attributed to Pythagoras. He saw them as representative of the intervals, or divisions, of a seven-note musical scale.⁵ Although Pythagoras left no practical experiment to demonstrate the role of intervals, the ancient Greeks would later use a single-stringed instrument known as a monochord for this purpose. It had a movable bridge so that the string could be divided into two parts of variable proportions known as intervals.

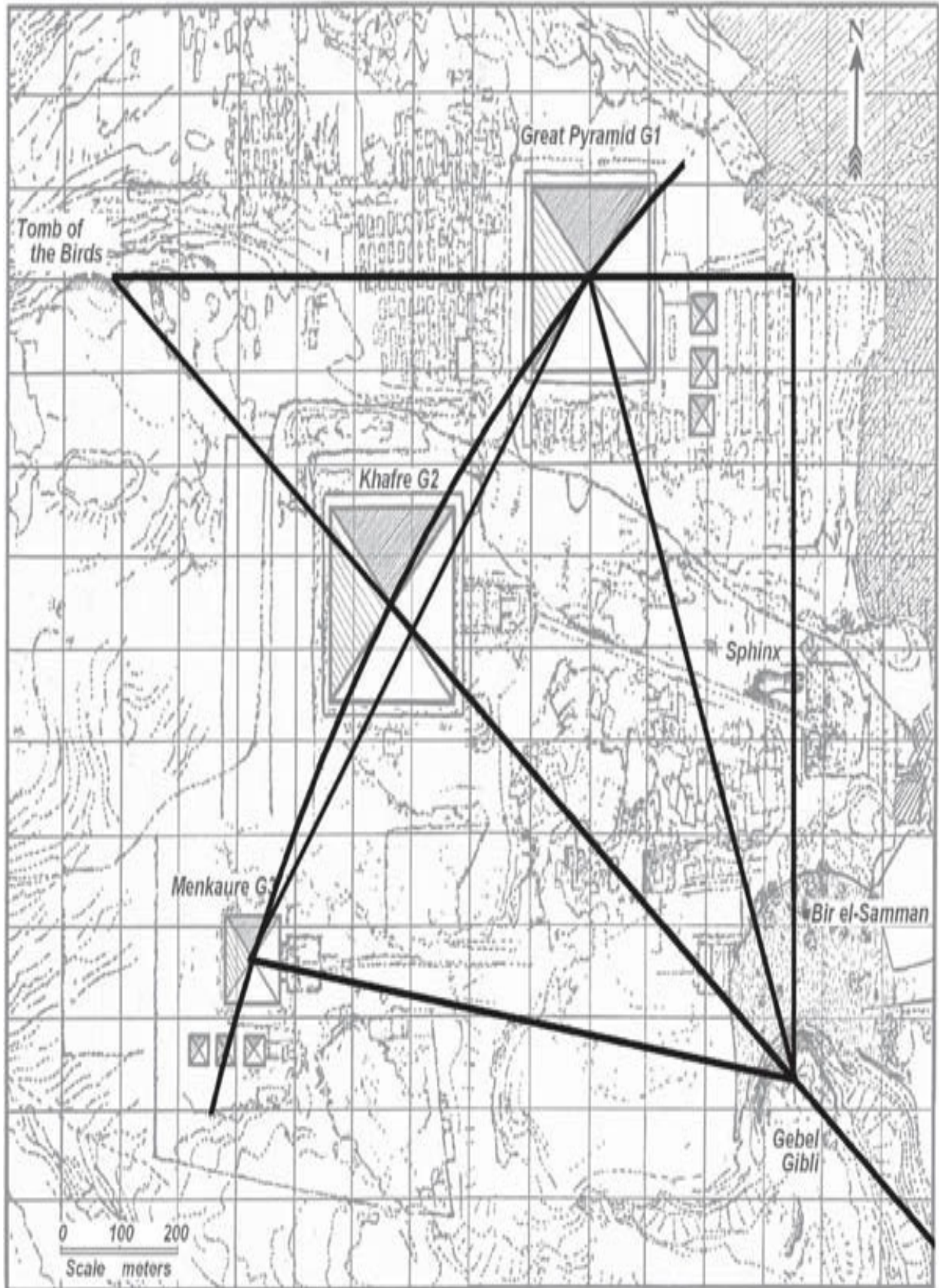
Although, like trigonometry, the invention of a seven-note musical scale, along with the corresponding intervals, is accredited to the Greeks, there is every reason to suspect that these tonal relationships were known to earlier civilizations, with the Sumerians and Babylonians being the most often cited. However, the ancient Egyptians also used a musical scale of seven notes or vowels. For instance, Demetrius of Phaleron (c. 350-280 BC), an Athenian orator and early librarian in Alexandria, wrote that ceremonies performed by the ancient Egyptians featured the seven “Greek” vowels, “one by one, thus producing harmonious sounds and eliminating the need for instrumental accompaniment.”⁶ Nicomachus of Gerasa, a mathematician and Pythagorean who lived c. AD 100, added that these are “the vowels of seven stars,” a form of intoning that was preserved in the Coptic Christian Church and remains in use today.⁷

Pythagoras himself was said to have devised the system of musical intervals from the sounds made by different-sized hammers used by smiths in a workshop. Yet it is supposed that he was originally introduced to such ideas during the twenty-two years he spent being tutored in the temples of ancient Egypt.⁸ All the intervals relate to single-number ratios—2:1 for an octave, 3:2 for a fifth, 4:3 for a fourth, and 9:8 for a whole tone. These same single-note ratios are found also in Pythagoras’s right-angled triangles, which he saw as mathematical and geometrical expressions of musical intervals, their commonality deriving from a

unifying divine principle called the Monad, “the One,” which went on to become a name of God in later hermetic literature. For Pythagoras, mathematics, geometry, and sound were all manifestations of the same cosmic principle.

The reason for explaining all of this was Hale’s discovery of three further Pythagorean triangles. These were found using Gebel Gibli as a place of commencement, a “datum point,” with an east-west line extending from the north-south datum line to reach the apexes of all three pyramids—the hypotenuse being created by drawing a line from their peaks back to Gebel Gibli.

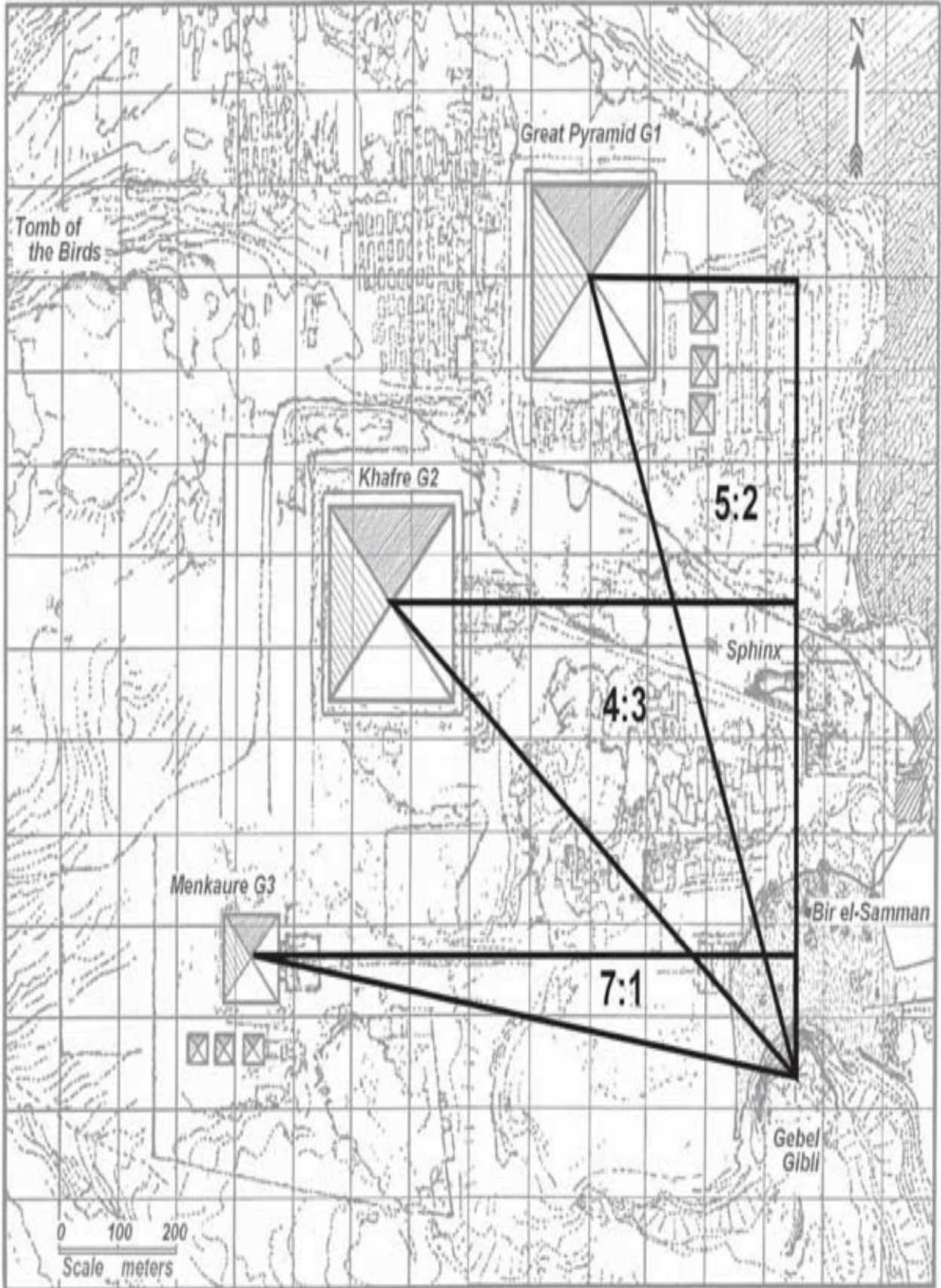
Finding Pythagorean triangles in Giza may not seem all that important. Yet what makes these examples significant is that they all possess single number proportions—5:2 for the Great Pyramid, 3:4 for the Second Pyramid, and 7:1 for the Third Pyramid (see figure 32). The accuracy of these triangles is quite extraordinary.⁹



31. Plan of the Giza plateau showing the apex circle with its sight line via Gebel Gibli overlaid on the equilateral triangle, with its bisector corresponding to not just the aforementioned sight line but also the hypotenuse of the 3:4:5 triangle.

The Principle of Kosmos

If the Pythagorean triangles discovered by Rodney Hale are not simply the product of chance alone, then their existence reflects a belief among the ancient Egyptians in the importance of a presumably seven-note musical scale in the placement of their monuments. Might each triangle have signified a different interval, denoting an individual musical division or sound that was intoned or created during foundation rituals that went toward the crystallization of an underlying cosmic blueprint, expressed in terms of mathematics, geometry, and divine harmony? Had this been achieved through the establishment of a datum point on Gebel Gibli and the subsequent creation of a north-south datum line, from which the sound-inspired geometry came into being?



32. Giza plan showing three further Pythagorean triangles, each stemming from the proposed datum line and datum point on Gebel Gibli. Their right-angled sides bear single number ratios—5:2 for the Great Pyramid, 3:4 for the Second Pyramid, and 7:1 for the Third Pyramid.

It was a principle expressed by the Hellenic Greeks in the word *cosmos*, thus *cosmos* (the Greek), in which beauty was seen in terms of the totality of all things nourished from a single *omphalos* located at the center of the world. This, of course, was the role of the *Bnnt* embryo in the womblike center of the Underworld of the Soul. Was there some relationship between this chthonic structure being associated with Egypt's original primordial mound and Gebel Gibli's apparent role in the creation of the Giza pyramid field?

The Mountain of Upper Rostau

Unfortunately, no inscriptions or texts from the Pyramid Age mention Giza's southern mount in any recognizable form, meaning that Gebel Gibli's role at this time will be difficult to establish. What we do have, however, are inscriptions from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties alluding to the "mountain of upper Rosetau [i.e., Rostau]," the "great mountain of Rosetau," and "that mountain of upper Rosetau,"¹⁰ with Kafr el-Gebel being the most obvious identity of Upper Rostau. Although there does seem to have been a notable kôm (Arabic for "mound") here, addressed in a stela found on the spot as "this gebel [or hill] of Upper Rostau," this hardly seems to warrant the title "mountain," even though the village name translates as "settlement of the mount."

Since Gebel Gibli falls on the sight line linking the center of the apex circle in Kafr el-Gebel with the Second Pyramid, I believe it possible that the "mountain of upper Rosetau" was in fact Gebel Gibli, since its presence on the plateau's southern edge would have directed the eye toward Upper Rostau as viewed from the central part of the pyramid field. Interestingly, Gebel Gibli's modern name also expresses a direction of religious significance. Gebel means "mount" or "hill," while gibli or qibli means "south," from the Arabic qiblah, meaning "direction of prayer," toward which Muslims pray to Mecca. Thus Gebel Gibli's place-name as the direction of the Muslim qiblah, that is, toward the south, only makes sense when the hill is viewed from the perspective of the northerly placed pyramid field.

Splendid Place of the Beginning of Time

The biggest clue to Gebel Gibli's importance from a very early age is, however, a single line on the Dream Stela of Thutmose IV, erected between the paws of the Sphinx monument. It speaks of "Sekhmet, presiding over the Mountain, the Splendid Place of the Beginning of Time [i.e., Zep Tepi]." ¹¹ In this respect, writer-researcher Simon Cox asked, "Could it be that the 'mountain' was in fact our southern rocky hill [i.e., Gebel Gibli]? Was this 'the Splendid Place of the Beginning of Time'?" ¹²

I think the answer to both these questions is definitely yes.

The lioness-headed goddess Sekhmet, the wife of the Memphite creator god Ptah, as well as a form of Hathor, personified the unbearable heat of the sun, her body its blinding glare. From the latitude of Egypt, the midday sun would always have been south of zenith, meaning that if viewed from the Sphinx, the location of the Dream Stela, the noonday sun would always have been directly above the summit of Gebel Gibli, whatever the day of the year. This makes Gebel Gibli the "mountain" over which Sekhmet was seen to preside. Thus, by default, it means that "the Splendid Place of the Beginning of Time," a perfect allusion to the island of creation and primeval mound, was indeed Gebel Gibli.

Did this mean that Gebel Gibli marked the entrance to Giza's lost underworld? With the well of the holy man Hamid el-Samman—our best candidate for the Edfu texts' Place of the Well—lying directly beneath its rocky summit, and traditions suggesting that this is the entrance to a subterranean realm beneath the plateau of Giza, these speculations have real merit.

Whether Gebel Gibli was the original island of creation, set on the edge of the Nile flood plains around c. 11,000-10,000 BC, is quite another matter. It could have been. On the other hand, it might well have been the case that at some stage in the development of ancient Egypt's creation myths, Gebel Gibli was assumed to have been the island of creation, based on a prevailing belief that it was located somewhere in the area. Ideally, any primeval mound rising out of the flood plains would have been surrounded by water, at least during the annual inundation, implying that it was most likely located on low ground. This, of course, is not the case with Gebel Gibli, the base of which ranges between thirty-three and sixty-six feet (10 to 20 meters) above sea level.

This said, during the Pyramid Age the Nile flowed much farther west than it does today, meaning that the inundation would have lapped against the very base of the cliffs marking the eastern extent of the Libyan desert. Indeed, there are photographs and engravings from the nineteenth century that actually show the Nile inundation reaching close to the edge of the plateau (see figure 33 and plate 12). At such times, the larger of the kôms (occupational mounds) and gebels (mounts or hills) in the vicinity of what is today Nazlet el-Batran and Nazlet el-Samman would have been elevated above the inundation in a manner reminiscent of the concept of the island of creation.

Thus we can say that although Gebel Gibli, Giza's southern mount, might have been seen as an island of creation from a very early age, we must never lose sight of the possibility that an even earlier example might once have existed nearby, perhaps farther south, in the vicinity of Kafr el-Gebel, the probable site of Upper Rostau.



Photog. Ad. G. Lohagian & C^o

33. Photograph of the Giza Pyramids taken in 1878, showing that the annual inundation came right up to the edge of the plateau.

The First Place

Yet what of Gebel Gibli itself? Might local folklore preserve some semblance of its dynastic role as “the Splendid Place of the Beginning of Time”? One variation of its name is Gebel Gibli Ahram, meaning the “southern pyramid mount,” with ahram being the Egyptian Arabic term for “pyramid.”¹³ It is a title that reflects not only the knoll’s position on the southern edge of the plateau but also its likeness (when viewed from the north) to a pyramid-like hill.

In addition to this, Gebel Gibli bears other alternative names, which reveal more about its character. For instance, it is referred to as el-Hadbah (or el-Hadabah), Egyptian Arabic for “the high place,” which might have religious connotations. It is known also as Sinit el-Agoz, meaning the “tooth of the old woman (or man).” This is quite possibly an allusion to a pair of isolated rocks that jut out from its summit, giving it the appearance of a near toothless jaw line.

I learned also that Gebel Gibli is called Tarfaya, pronounced “ta-fire.” In Arabic this usually translates as “a long, high, steep escarpment,” from the root tar, or alternatively, an “edge, side, border, tip, point, spur,” from the root taraf.¹⁴ Yet our taxi driver and guide, Hussein el-Mor, was adamant that the place-name means “the first place” or “the place of the beginning,” due both to the site’s immense age and to its having come before everything else on the plateau. He had no idea why the hill should have come to be seen in this way. Just maybe it echoes Gebel Gibli’s role as “the Splendid Place of the Beginning of Time.”

Simulacrum of Sokar

There is, however, one further fact regarding Gebel Gibli that cannot go unmentioned. We have no idea what this southern mount might have looked like during the Pyramid Age. However, when viewed today from the north-northeast, in line with the Great Pyramid, the extended outline of Gebel Gibli bears a striking resemblance to an osiriform, or mummiform, coffin case, orientated east-west, with the beak of a bird formed by its summit. Indeed, in this manner it bears an uncanny likeness to mummy cases known to represent Sokar-Osiris from Egypt's Late Period (see figure 34).

All of this is, surely, coincidence alone. However, the likelihood that some form of simulacrum, formed from the overriding appearance of Gebel Gibli, might have contributed to Giza's primeval sanctity, even before the Pyramid Age, is, I feel, not outside the realm of possibility.

Cayce's Mound Yet Uncovered

Strangely, in several life readings Edgar Cayce alluded to a “mound not yet uncovered,”¹⁵ constructed in Giza during some primeval age. Described as “the first pyramid [built],”¹⁶ it was said to be the resting place of ancestors from the Ra-Ta period, c. 11,000-10,000 BC. Never has this “pyramid” been identified, although one reading specified its location as “facing that of the mystery [of the Sphinx].”¹⁷ This statement has been assumed to mean that the mound lay in the Nile Valley, between the leonine monument and the river, where the Hall of Records was thought to be located. However, in the knowledge that Gebel Gibli might easily be said to “face” the Sphinx—yet not from the east, but from the south—I feel that there is every reason to conclude that this is Cayce’s “mound not yet uncovered.”

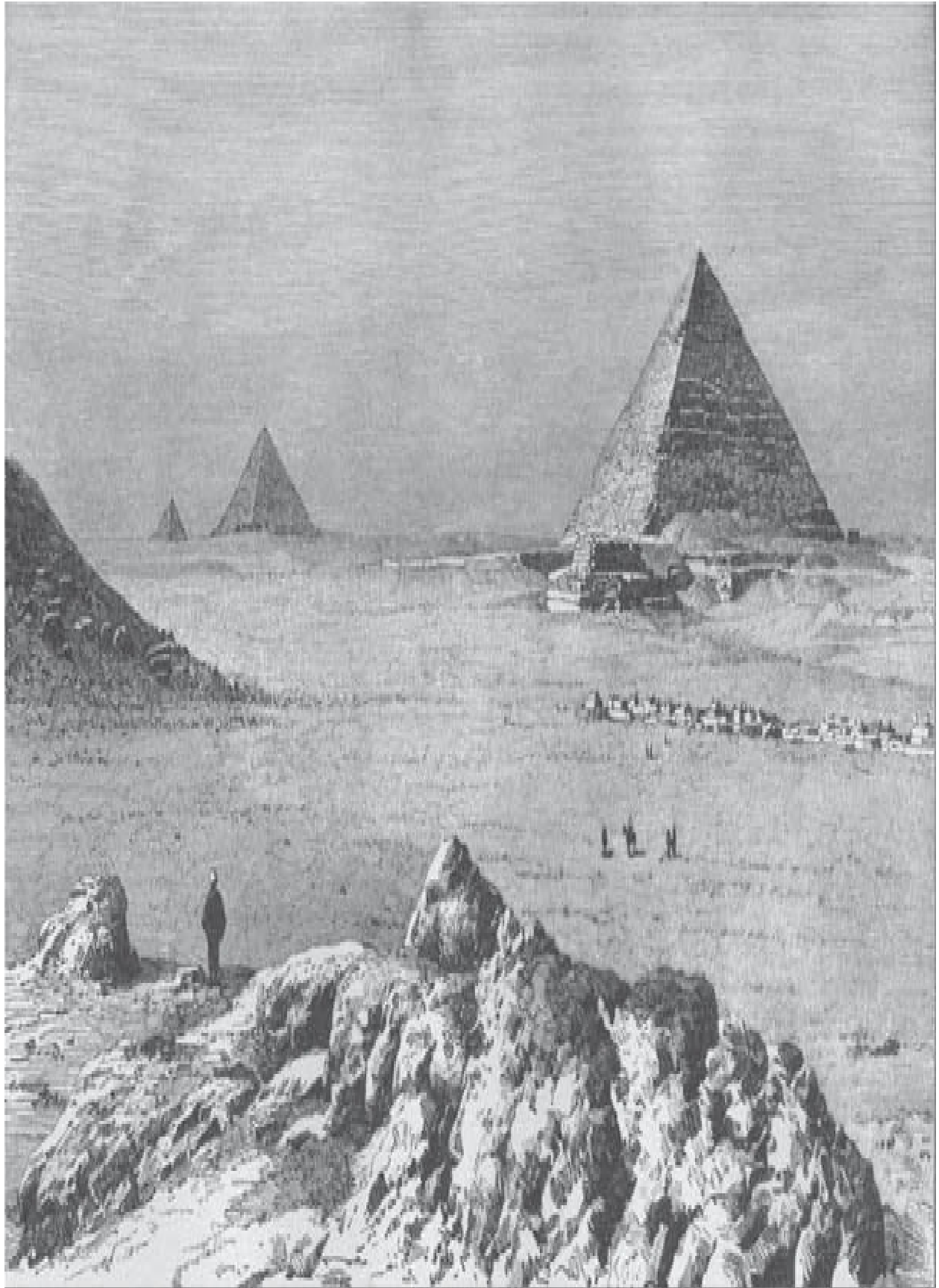
Interestingly, one Cayce reading from July 1, 1932, spoke of the future discovery of the Hall of Records, adding: “This may not be entered without an understanding, for those that were left as guards may not be passed until after a period of their regeneration in the Mount,”¹⁸ an apparent reference to the spiritual evolution of mankind bringing with it a better comprehension of the role being played by the ancestor spirits still present there. Since this “Mount” is simply another allusion to “the first pyramid [built]” and the “mound not yet uncovered,” then it implies that Cayce might unconsciously have been connecting Gebel Gibli with his prophesied future opening of the Egyptian Hall of Records.



34. Gebel Gibli as viewed from the Second Pyramid's causeway on the line between the Great Pyramid and the rocky knoll. Note the hill's similarity to the classic depictions of Sokar-Osiris in his role as the mummiform, or osiriform, coffin; in this case, one from Tutankhamun's tomb. Did such simulacra help cement the hill's association with the presence hereabouts of Osiris's tomb?

Vocal Intonement

Nazlet el-Samman's holy man Sidi Hamid el-Samman might himself have been aware of Gebel Gibli's ancient role, for I found that in addition to regularly visiting the well Bir el-Samman, he is said to have "lived" on the summit of Gebel Gibli. Indeed, the low foundations of a stone building somewhere in the vicinity are pointed out as evidence of his presence here. How exactly this Sufi master might have understood the spiritual potency of Gebel Gibli is not recorded. Yet in the knowledge that he has long been revered as a physician, healer, and mystic of great merit and is said to have been the last in a long line of holy men in Giza, I suspect that some kind of religious motivation was behind his continued presence on this most ancient of hills. One might almost imagine him seated upon its summit, gazing out over the pyramid field and intoning sacred verses in a manner that his forebears had done in one form or another since dynastic times. It is a vision I have imagined myself when seated upon the heights of Gebel Gibli.



35. Antique print of the Second and Third Pyramids from the heights of Gebel Gibli. Was this the “Splendid Place of the Beginning of Time” of the Sphinx’s Dream Stela? Was it also the point out from which the pyramid field was created?

Having established that Gebel Gibli would appear to have played a key role in the creation of the pyramid field, Rodney Hale and I wanted to see whether this cosmic ground plan extended into the night sky via the local horizon. What we found provided the key to discovering not just the whereabouts of Giza’s underworld domain, but also its lost entrance.



Part

Three

Ascension

-

Horizon of Khufu

Around 5000 BC, a “calendar circle” of standing stones was constructed on the edge of a drained lake basin in a place called Nabta Playa, situated in the Western Sahara approximately sixty miles (100 km) west of Abu Simbel. Close by, five stone rows radiate out from a central cluster of megaliths (great stones). Both the calendar circle and stone rows target celestial events in the year, such as the equinoxes and solstices, as well as the rising and setting of specific stars. What is more, newer stones were found alongside older ones in the stone rows, suggesting that whoever was responsible for the maintenance of this site had become aware of the gradual drift of the stellar background against the local horizon caused by precession—the slow wobble of the earth’s axis. Since a star shifts just one degree in every seventy-two years, it implies that Nabta Playa must have been in use across many hundreds of years before being abandoned to the ever-encroaching desert.

Nabta Playa is arguably one of the oldest-known astronomically aligned sites in the world, and its presence in Egypt’s Western Sahara should prime us to the fact that the stars must have continued to play an importance to the peoples of the Nile Valley following the rise of the first pharaoh, around 3100 BC. In fact, we find that the earliest religious literature in Egypt makes this blatantly clear. Repeatedly, the Pyramid Texts, written toward the end of the Old Kingdom, speak of the soul of the deceased ascending into the sky and reaching the proximity of the Pole Star.¹ This is the star closest to the North Celestial Pole, around which the heavens are seen to revolve as viewed from anywhere in the Northern Hemisphere.

In particular, the soul (ba) of the deceased was thought to journey to what were known as the “Imperishable Stars” (Ikhemu-seku), those that forever turn about the North Celestial Pole without ever setting beneath the horizon.² Here the deceased would become an akh, a “glorious” or “shining” spirit—a radiant being—at one for all eternity with the akhu, the “Great Ones in the north of the sky.”³

An exact notion of what the Imperishable Stars were thought to be is now debatable, with modern scholarly thinking tending to see them as not just the circumpolar stars but also those that set briefly before rising again into the night sky.⁴ This new definition of the Imperishable Stars may extend to certain constellations that lie either upon or north of the Milky Way or, alternatively, those that were seen to exist north of the ecliptic, the sun’s daily path through the heavens.

In addition to a primary and overriding belief that the soul of the deceased would journey, either in the form of a soul bird or via a sky ladder,⁵ to a paradisiacal existence among the “Great Ones in the north of the sky,” the Pyramid Texts also contain elements of quite contradictory religious beliefs and practices concerning a celestial afterlife, and the means to get there. For instance, they talk about the dead pharaoh joining with the sun god Re as he sails daily across the sky in his solar barque. Quite separately, the Pyramid Texts talk about the soul of the deceased journeying to Sekhet-aaru, the Field of Reeds, an ancient Egyptian variation of the Elysian fields of Greek mythology. Here it would live for all eternity in a world not unlike our own.

Destination Orion

Still other passages speak of the pharaoh ascending to a stellar destination in the eastern sky in his guise as Osiris, Lord of the Underworld. His realm is given as the star Sah, meaning “noble” (as in to be “freeborn”), usually identified by Egyptologists as the stars making up the constellation of Orion, the celestial hunter. However, in some instances the star Sah is clearly another bright star, most likely Canopus, second only in brightness to Sirius in the night sky.⁶

Despite the powerful influence of Orion, Sirius, and Canopus in the star lore of the ancient Egyptians, it was clearly the stars of the northern sky that were foremost in the minds of the Pyramid Builders. Like virtually all pyramids built up until the Middle Kingdom, those in Giza were aligned so that their entrance passages faced north. As such, they targeted the meridian, the imaginary north-south line that divides the celestial sphere from horizon to horizon and across which the Imperishable Stars were seen to culminate, that is, transit, or cross, each night as they reached their highest (and indeed lowest) point in the sky.

Horizon of Khufu

Both in their north-facing entrances and in their almost perfect orientations toward the cardinal points, the Giza Pyramids, like all their contemporaries built during this epoch, were constructed to reflect a cosmic order expressed by the unerring regularity of the heavens—a principle known to the ancient Egyptians as ma'at, meaning “divine truth.” It was this astronomical cycle that the deceased pharaoh was required to become at one with both in life and in death, and this was achieved only if his funerary monument acted as a reflection of the celestial world. Such a belief is confirmed in the knowledge that some pyramids in the Memphis necropolis, although not those in Giza, bore star-related names. For example, the pyramid of Djedefre, a son of Khufu, located in Abu Roash, 5 miles (8 km) north of Giza, was known as “Djedefre’s Starry Sky”; while at a site named Zawyet el-Aryan, 1.5 miles (2 km) south of Giza, there existed a Fourth Dynasty pyramid complex that bore the title “Neferka is a Star.”

The name applied to the Great Pyramid, and in certain circumstances to the entire Giza necropolis, was Akhet-Khufu.⁷ This has been translated as meaning the “horizon (akhet) of Khufu,” a reference to the plateau being the western horizon—the horizon of the dead—as viewed from the ancient cult center of the sun god Re in Heliopolis. However, the hieroglyph denoting the word horizon is a saddle back indentation between two hills or mountains, while the sign invariably used for Akhet-Khufu is the crested ibis bird, meaning akh, “glorious spirit,” which is what the deceased pharaoh would become upon achieving ascension.

Place of Ascension

Thus Akhet-Khufu must mean something like “where Khufu becomes an akh spirit,” showing that this, too, relates to the Great Pyramid’s role as a place of ascension. British pyramid scholar I.E.S. Edwards concluded that the ancient Egyptian name for pyramid, *mr* or *mer*, could be broken down into two components—*m*, meaning “instrument” or “place,” and *ar*, implying “ascension,” suggesting something like “place/instrument of ascension.”⁸ It was a theory seconded by American Egyptologist Mark Lehner in *The Complete Pyramids* (1997),⁹ even though Edwards remained hesitant about the interpretation, saying that it was open to “justifiable doubt.” Despite this, Lehner went on to remark:

Some religious or cosmic impulse beyond the purely practical may also have influenced the ancient surveyors, though we can only speculate what it was.¹⁰

That the Giza Pyramids represent stars and that some “cosmic impulse” might have been behind their construction was the conclusion also of Egyptologist Selim Hassan, who posed the question: “Can it, therefore, be that the early kings of Egypt were following an ancient stellar cult, and that the pyramids have also some connection with this?”¹¹

Sacred to a Star

Certainly, this was the belief of medieval Arab writers, who wrote about the legends and superstitions surrounding the Giza Pyramids. For example, Shehab Eddin Ahmed ben Yahya el-Omari, who died c. 1348, recorded in the first volume of a twenty-volume history that “each of the Pyramids [the Great and the Second Pyramid] was consecrated to a star.”¹² Furthermore, he wrote that “every pyramid presents the form of a lantern. It begins at its base as an equilateral triangle, which diminishes as it rises, so that it is surrounded by equilateral sides. This form indicates that it was sacred to a star.”¹³

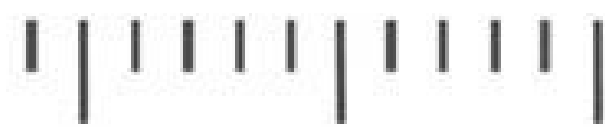
Where the idea came from that the two largest pyramids in Giza were stars or stars in the shape of “lanterns” is not specified, but I suspect that there is a case for assuming that this was knowledge passed down through the ages by informed sources, who continued to believe it to be the case.

Selim Hassan noted that even if a stellar cult did exist in Giza, by the reign of Khafre it was being rapidly superseded by the cult of Re, the sun god, which had risen to become the new royal-backed state religion.¹⁴ It was for this reason that the Pyramid Texts, the earliest forms of which appeared for the first time as much as 250 years after the construction of the Great Pyramid, contain contradictory elements of other funerary religions, as ideas were changing fast. Almost overnight, the ancient interest in the northern night sky started to compete with prominent stars of the southern sky, such as Sah, the star of Osiris. This has been identified both with the stars of Orion and the bright star Canopus, visible at night low on the southern horizon. As a consequence of this shift in celestial funerary beliefs, the southern sky gradually became the primary destination of the pharaoh in death.

This is not to say that a funerary cult surrounding the star Sah (later identified

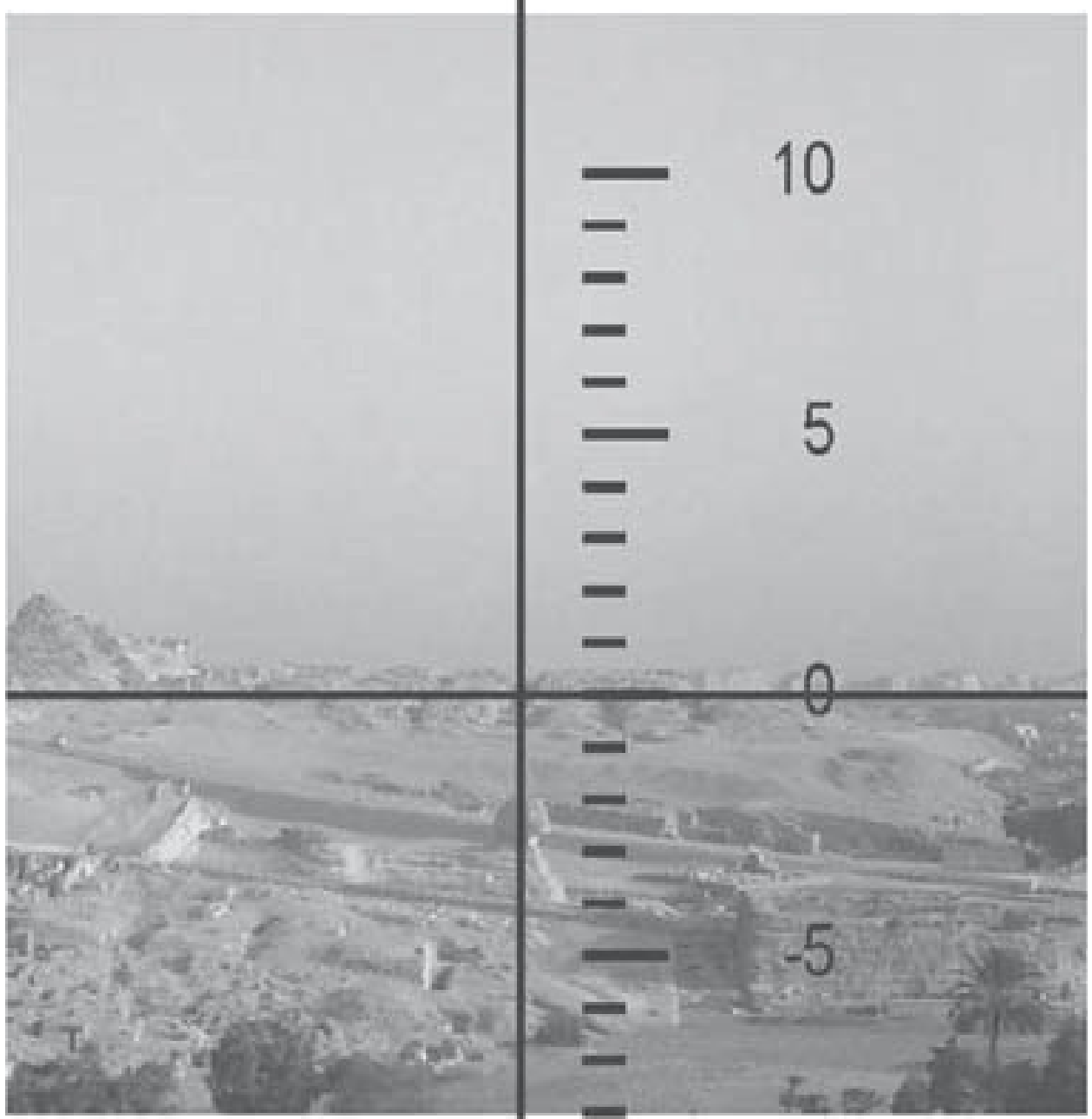
with Sahu, the name of Orion in a year calendar featuring a sequence of thirty-six key stars or star groups known as decans) did not exist prior to this time. It is simply a case that, from the absence of Osiris in any inscriptions prior to the Pyramid Texts, it is clear that this particular stellar doctrine did not rise to prominence until after the Heliopolitan priesthood had gained a strong grip on the dissemination of religious thought during the mid to late Fourth Dynasty. Thus to understand any grand design in Giza, it will be necessary to trace ancient Egypt's older stellar-based religion, which seems to have favored the Imperishable Stars as the chief destination of the soul.

To do this, we must return to Rodney Hale's findings concerning the pyramid field's proposed landscape geometry, where our point of foundation was the equilateral triangle with its corners fixed by the peaks of the Great Pyramid and Third Pyramid, and the summit of Gebel Gibli. As the reader will recall, an exact arc was identified as being formed by the apexes of the three pyramids, with a center 1.47 miles (2360 meters) southeast of the Second Pyramid, close to the cemetery of Kafr el-Gebel, almost certainly the site of Upper Rostau. A line back from this center point through the summit of Gebel Gibli targets the apex of the Second Pyramid and almost exactly bisects the aforementioned triangle.



350

0



10

5

0

-5

-10

36. Closeup of the Sphinx from the summit of Gebel Gibli, showing its alignment with the north-south meridian line.

The Cosmic Lion

What we can say with some certainty is that it was from Gebel Gibli that the Giza pyramid field took form, creating in the process two significant sight lines that emerge from a datum point coincident to its summit. The first of these we shall review is the north-south datum line, which, when viewed from Gebel Gibli, targets the head of the Great Sphinx. Extending the line beyond the leonine monument brings the eye to an enormous mastaba tomb (a rectangular structure, which was the precursor to the first pyramids), the largest in Giza's Eastern Cemetery.

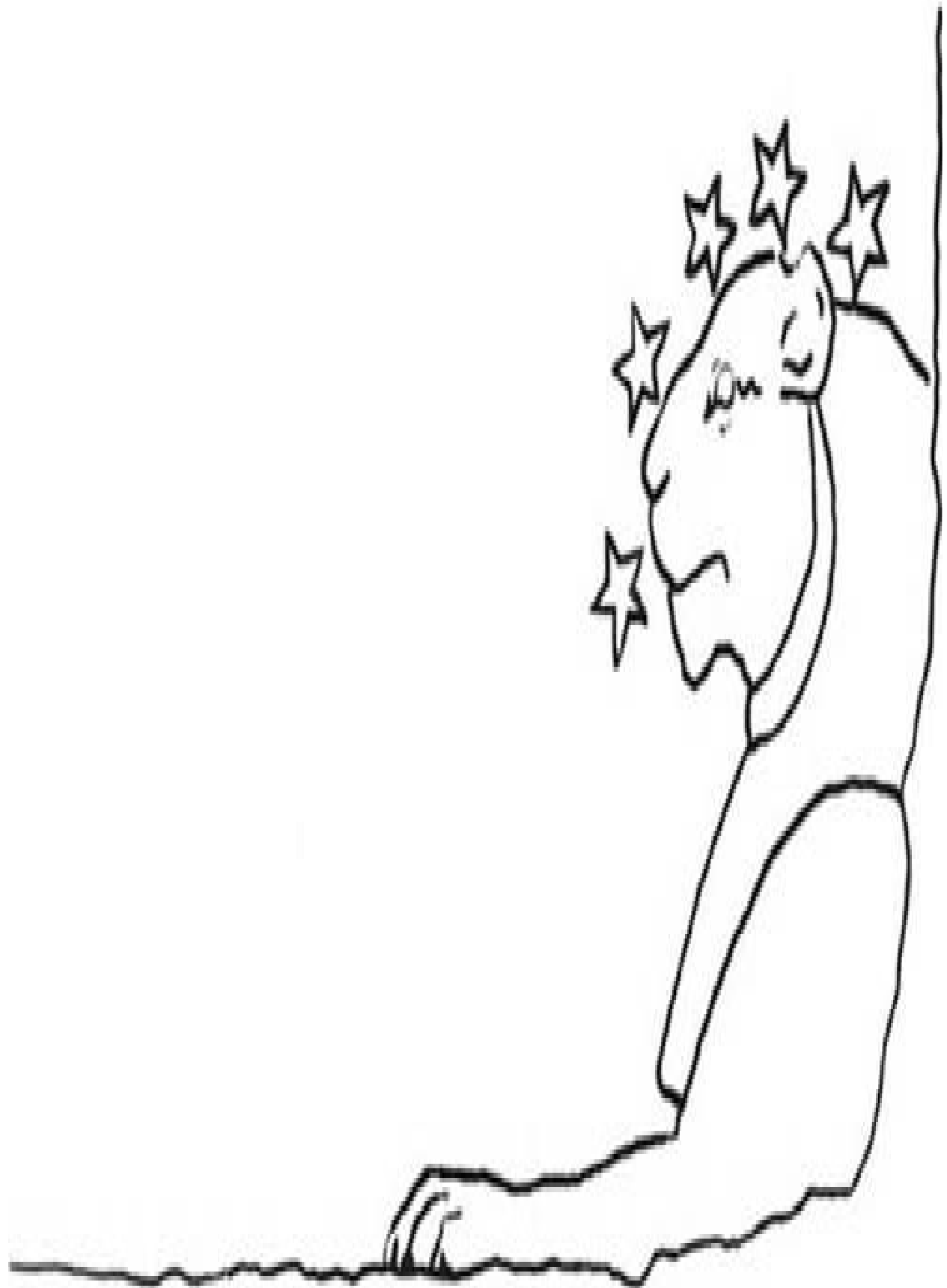
Designated G7510, the mastaba in question is thought to have been built for Prince Ankh-haf, a younger brother of Khufu, who served as a vizier and overseer of works to Khafre, the builder of the Second Pyramid. As seen from Gebel Gibli, G7510, situated some four hundred yards (366 meters) due east of the Great Pyramid's apex line, marks the exact position on the horizon of the meridian. Indeed, the simple erection of a pole on Gebel Gibli in line with the Sphinx's head and mastaba G7510 would have been enough to highlight this clear relationship with the northern night sky.

Was it possible that the Sphinx had a celestial counterpart—one that reflected its shape, identity, and attributes? Strangely, there is no mention of this monument during the Pyramid Age. This is curious, especially as a number of inscriptions exist that are contemporary to the construction of the pyramids. They include a number from statues found in association with the temples serving the pyramid complexes. Yet the first inscriptions to address the Sphinx by name come from the reign of Amenhotep I, a king of the New Kingdom who ruled c. 1550-1528 BC.

Some of the earliest inscriptions that do honor the Sphinx address it as Atum, or

Atum-re, the creator god and head of the divine Ennead of Heliopolis in his form as the sun god Re, who cast the first light following the emergence of the primeval island from the waters of Nun. More commonly, however, the monument is addressed as Horemakhet, “Horus in the Horizon,” or Horakhty, “Horus of the Horizon,” both forms of the sun in his guise as the falcon-headed god Horus. In early dynastic history, Horus had been a “star god” rather than simply a celestial god, since he was identified with a star and is shown riding in a boat across the sky.¹⁵

Which star was associated with Horus is a matter of conjecture, with most scholars arguing that it was either Mars or Venus. British Egyptologist Richard Wilkinson, on the other hand, has identified the god Horakhty as a form of cosmic lion. This he identifies with the group of stars that today make up the constellation of Leo, the lion of the zodiac, which he argues coalesced with the sun god Re during the New Kingdom to become Re-Horakhty, a name also used to address the Sphinx.¹⁶ That the ancient Egyptians might have identified the stars of Leo as a cosmic lion makes sense, for as early as 4000 BC the peoples of ancient Mesopotamia, that is, those who thrived on the Euphrates river in what is today Iraq and Northern Syria, had themselves come to identify this same group of stars as a celestial lion.¹⁷



37. Relief showing a lion in the form of a sky figure surrounded by stars. Was the constellation of Leo, the celestial lion, recognized in ancient Egypt?

A cross-fertilization of star lore between the civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, before even the start of the Pyramid Age, is most likely indeed. It is very possible that the peoples of both kingdoms saw the stars of Leo as a cosmic lion, the reason perhaps why the ancient Greeks also came to identify this same group of stars with a leonine form. Since the Sphinx monument was addressed during the New Kingdom as both Horakhty and Re-horakhty, and if Egyptologist Richard Wilkinson is correct, then the Sphinx represents Horus in his form as a cosmic lion coalesced with Re, the Heliopolitan sun god.

The Midnight Lion

As viewed from Gebel Gibli, the Sphinx lies due north in side profile, its gaze fixed firmly upon the eastern horizon, where the sun rose each morning. At the time of the summer solstice during the Pyramid Age, the sun's emergence would have been heralded by the appearance low on the horizon of the stars that make up the constellation of Leo. They would have risen in exactly the same place where afterward the sun would have appeared. At night, the stars of Leo would have accompanied the sun as it set down into the western horizon, even though the asterism would have been invisible to the naked eye.

For the Pyramid Builders, it would have seemed as if the celestial lion were the sun's personal guardian, not only as it entered and exited the duat underworld, presided over by the twin Aker lion, but also while it was passing through it. Indeed, from Gebel Gibli one gazes down at the Sphinx, which sits in its own sunken enclosure well below the visual horizon, almost as if it exists in the underworld itself. So might this positioning be explained in astronomical terms?

If a suitable sky program is consulted, we can see that the stars of Leo, as the Sphinx's proposed celestial counterpart, cross the meridian, high in the northern night sky, upside down, its head facing west. Only twelve hours later—after Leo has set and is directly beneath the horizon, crossing the anti-meridian (i.e., one that passes beneath the earth)—does it suddenly start to bear an uncanny resemblance to the Sphinx as viewed from Gebel Gibli. In other words, at midnight on the summer solstice, the stars of Leo cross the anti-meridian in the company of the midnight sun in a manner that exactly resembles the Sphinx monument. If correct, then it implies that the monument was meant to represent the midnight sun in the company of the celestial lion, that is, Horemakhet or Horakhy, as it reached the deepest part of the duat underworld at the time of the summer solstice.

Such a realization may explain why the Great Sphinx is located on Giza's proposed north-south datum line and why it reflects the position of the twin Aker lion seen in the Am-duat's Fifth Hour, which occurs immediately before the midnight hour, the deepest part of the Duat.



38. The Sphinx as viewed from Gebel Gibel overlaid with the key stars of Leo.

Such profound ideas concerning the astronomical function of the Sphinx hint at the possibility that the plateau of Giza was identified as a personification, or representation, of the Duat as seen from the heights of Gebel Gibli. This, of course, is the perspective of the Great Pyramid and Sphinx monument when compared against the scene of the pyramid mound and twin Aker lion supporting the oval island of the Duat in the Am-duat's Fifth Hour. Again, this is hardly likely to be a simple coincidence.

What all of this suggests is that the monuments of the Giza pyramid field functioned as if they were actually built within the Duat, where access to the stars was achieved only as they passed beneath the plateau. It was for this reason, I suspect, that the Great Pyramid, and afterward the Giza necropolis as a whole, took the name Akhet-Khufu, the "Horizon of Khufu," symbolizing the point of access into the Duat of Rostau. Only through making its passage through the underworld in the form of the sun god could the soul of the deceased be born anew on the eastern horizon, where the Sphinx's gaze is eternally fixed. It would then be free to rise into the sky to become an akh, a radiant spirit, at one with the Imperishable Stars.

All these realizations suggest that we should be looking toward the starry sky as it might have been seen to exist in the underworld for further clues regarding Giza's apparent ground-sky correlation. In the next chapter, we shall return to Gebel Gibli and examine its other main sight line. This is the one that locks in the position of the Second Pyramid with both Gebel Gibli and the center of the apex circle in Kafr el-Gebel, for this now provides our greatest clue as to what stars featured most in Egypt's archaic sky religion.

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Reflections of Heaven

From Gebel Gibli outward, the Giza plateau was created—its three Pyramids bowing majestically toward the dim memory of a bygone age, ancient even by the lifetime of Khufu and his contemporaries Khafre and Menkaure. Yet, to lock the plateau's sacred geometry into the Egyptian principle of ma'at, divine truth and cosmic order, the Pyramid Builders needed also to synchronize their world with the rhythmic cycles of heaven. Thus Giza's grand design was, I suspect, extended upward and outward into the night sky and, arguably, as we have seen, even downward into the hollow darkness beneath the plateau itself.

To better comprehend how the ancient Egyptians might have understood such concepts, we need to examine their vision of Giza's ground-sky relationship, focusing now on Gebel Gibli's other main sight line, which might well have acted as an invisible backbone to Giza's proposed landscape geometry. This offers an azimuth (the horizontal angle in degrees, clockwise from true north) of 307.5 degrees (+/- 0.5 degrees), that is, close to northwest—a bearing that is within half a degree of the bisector of the previously explored equilateral triangle formed by the peaks of the Great Pyramid and Third Pyramid, and the summit of Gebel Gibli.¹

The Extinguishing of Sadr

Using the sky program StarryNight Pro version 4.5.0, Rodney Hale and I examined the skies in Giza for 2600 BC, the proposed start date, ipso facto, for Giza's landscape geometry. What we discovered was initially perplexing, for in this age, from the latitude of Giza (approximately 30 degrees north of the equator), only one bright star extinguished (set) at an azimuth of 307.5 degrees. This was Sadr (Gamma Cygni), a mid-second- (2.2) magnitude star at the center of the Northern Cross, a constellation known also as Cygnus, the celestial swan of Greek mythology (see figure 39). No other star with a magnitude greater than or equal to Sadr's came anywhere near to setting within the parameters of this proposed sight line, which, from the summit of Gebel Gibli, coincides almost perfectly with the Second Pyramid's vertical center line.²



39. Giza plan showing the sight line between Gebel Gibli and the center of the Second Pyramid, creating an azimuth of approximately 307.5 degrees. This targets the setting of the star Sadr in Cygnus, known also as the Northern Cross.

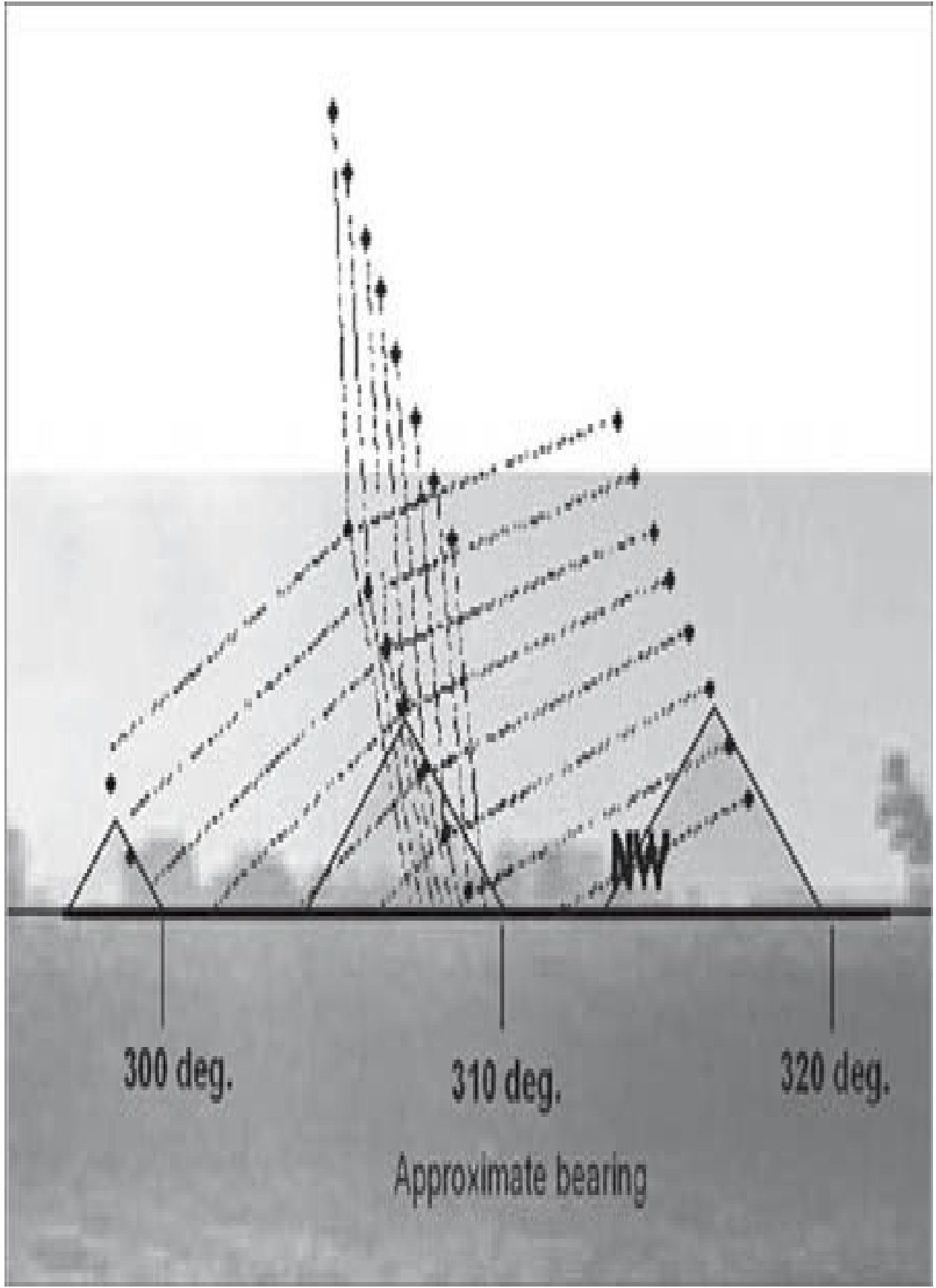
Hale and I then noted other curious facts concerning the Cygnus constellation and its apparent relationship to Giza's proposed landscape geometry. For instance, if you were to stand on the summit of Gebel Gibli and to gaze out across to the Second Pyramid in 2550 BC, the suspected time of its construction, Deneb (Alpha Cygni), which at 1.25 magnitude is Cygnus's brightest star, would have been seen to set into its apex (see plate 9).³ At the same time, the long, white stream of stars we know today as the Milky Way would have trailed up into the open sky from the position of the Second Pyramid, again as viewed from Gebel Gibli (see figure 40). It is a visual spectacle that cannot have gone unnoticed by the astronomer-priests responsible for the plateau's original construction. Several times the Pyramid Texts speak of the deceased encountering or crossing the Winding Waterway, the name given by the ancient Egyptians to the Milky Way, in order to reach an afterlife among the stars. For instance, one Utterance reads, "you have traversed the Winding Waterway in the north of the sky as a star crossing the sea which is beneath the sky," that is, in the duat underworld.⁴



40. Panorama of the Giza Pyramids as seen from Gebel Gibli c. 2500 BC, with the Milky Way streaming upward as Cygnus's bright star Deneb sets into the apex of the Second Pyramid.

Setting Stars

A fascination with the setting of stars belonging to the Cygnus constellation was not confined to the Second Pyramid, either. Extending the Sadr setting line south-eastward from the Second Pyramid brings you, at a distance of 1.47 miles (2360 meters), to the center of the arc made by the apexes of the three Giza Pyramids. This, as we have already seen, falls in the vicinity of the cemetery in Kafr el-Gebel, close to where a shrine or sanctuary honoring the original Shetayet of Sokar was most likely located. If the Sadr setting line were extended still farther—keeping it in line with Gebel Gibli and the peak of the Second Pyramid—at a distance of 1.8 miles (2900 meters), the observer of c. 2500 BC would have been able to witness Cygnus’s principal “wing” stars, Gienah, Sadr, and Delta Cygni, setting down into the apexes of, respectively, the Third Pyramid, Second Pyramid, and Great Pyramid (see figure 41 and plate 10).



41. Reconstruction of the Cygnus “wing” stars setting into the Giza pyramids c. 2500 BC. Each of the three stars matches its corresponding pyramid in the proposed ground-sky overlay.

At the same time, the Milky Way would have been seen to stream upward from the position of the Giza Pyramids if viewed from the Sadr setting line anywhere in the vicinity of Kafr el-Gebel, where the center of the arc created by the apexes of the three pyramids may be found. It is a spectacle that simply cannot have gone unnoticed in the Pyramid Age.

The apparent link between the Milky Way, the stars of Cygnus, and the placement of the Giza Pyramids does not end here, either. Yet, before going any further, we need to go back fifteen years to a literary event of considerable importance to this story.

The Orion Correlation Theory (OCT)

In 1994 a remarkable book was published that radically changed our perception of ancient Egypt's sky religion. *The Orion Mystery* by Belgian engineer Robert Bauval and mysteries writer Adrian Gilbert argued that the constellation of Orion, in its role as Sah, or Sahu, was the key to understanding Giza's grand design and the Pyramid Builders' vision of achieving an afterlife among the stars.⁵

Central to Bauval and Gilbert's thesis was that the Orion constellation was reflected on the ground in Giza. The three stars forming the celestial hunter's "belt"—Alnitak, Alnilam, and Mintaka—were said to match exactly the geographical positions of, respectively, the Great Pyramid, Second Pyramid, and Third Pyramid. Other key stars in Orion corresponded with the placement of Fourth Dynasty pyramids at sites outside Giza. The authors demonstrated also that the proximity of the Orion constellation to the Milky Way compared very well to the relationship between the Giza Pyramids and the nearby River Nile, which, in antiquity, was seen as a terrestrial extension of the Milky Way, the Winding Waterway of the Pyramid Texts.⁶

When Rodney Hale first read *The Orion Mystery*, he was absorbed by the compelling theories it offered but became concerned by its key claim that the belt stars of Orion matched exactly the positions of the three Giza Pyramids. The ground-sky overlay used to represent this correlation showed a highly overexposed image of the belt stars, making them unrealistically large. These were shown next to an aerial shot of the Giza Pyramids, aligned in a similar manner. Hale, wishing only to check the accuracy of the correlation, decided to compare an unenhanced photograph of the Orion stars with an available plan of the Pyramids. By scaling the stars Alnitak and Alnilam to fit the apexes of the Great Pyramid and Second Pyramid, and thus putting any possible offset on the Third Pyramid, Hale found that the third belt star, Mintaka, was misaligned with the apex of the Third Pyramid. Indeed, it was so far askew that the star fell

beyond even the pyramid's square base (see figure 42). Attempting to extend the Orion Correlation Theory, or OCT, as it became known, into the surrounding landscape by matching the constellation's remaining stars with other key pyramids was simply a nonstarter—it just did not work. This disappointed Hale, who had hoped that the ground-sky overlay might have proven more accurate.



42. The “belt” stars of Orion overlaid on the pyramids to create the OCT (Orion Correlation Theory).

The Cygnus-Giza Correlation

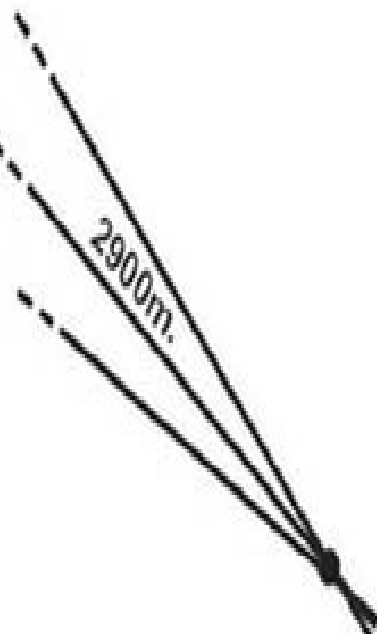
At the time, Hale wrote a report on the matter for private circulation, and there the matter rested for over a decade until lying in bed, unable to sleep one night in January 2005, Hale was unexpectedly struck by the thought of attempting to match the three Cygnus “wing” stars with the Giza Pyramids, in the same way that Bauval and Gilbert had done with Orion’s Belt. What he found was that if the Cygnus stars Delta Cygni and Sadr were matched with, respectively, the Great Pyramid and the Second Pyramid (their corresponding pyramids as determined by the Sadr setting line), leaving, once again, any possible offset on the Third Pyramid, then the match worked very well indeed. In fact, it was more accurate than the Orion correlation. Thus the manner in which the three wing stars of Cygnus could be witnessed setting down into the Giza Pyramids was replicated near perfectly from an overhead perspective as well (see figures 43 and 44). In other words, the star to pyramid relationship was now synchronized in both the horizontal and vertical planes!



43. The stars of Cygnus overlaid on the plateau, showing the close correlation between the placement of the Giza Pyramids and the three main “wing” stars.

Eye of the Bird

Since the Cygnus stars are visually wider apart in the night sky than those of Orion, any ground-sky overlay in which they feature will mean that the celestial bird's other main stars also fall somewhere on the plateau. For instance, Albireo, the star forming the base of Cygnus as the Northern Cross, was found to fall on Gebel Gibli, southeast of its summit. In Arabic, Albireo is Al Minhar al-Dajājah, the Hen's Beak, since it marks the position of the celestial bird's imagined head. This I found curious, for when the well Bir el-Samman is compared with the placement of the Cygnus stars on the Giza landscape, it falls very close to the imagined position of the bird's skull—more specifically, its eyes (see figure 45). Eye in Arabic is ain, which means also “spring” or “fountain,” as in a well, and occasionally Bir el-Samman is referred to as el-ain, the spring.



44. The Cygnus “wing” stars overlaid on the plateau with the same three stars setting into the Giza Pyramids c. 2500 BC, as viewed from a convergence point beyond Kafr el-Gebel, the probable site of Upper Rostau.

I am sure all of this is just a happy coincidence. However, it should be noted that the word samman, as found in the place-name Nazlet el-Samman, and we must assume in Hamid el-Samman and Bir el-Samman, derives not from a personal name but from a small, ground-feeding gaming bird called al-Simman wal-Kharif, the autumn quail.⁷ Known as the Pharaoh’s Bird (a name applied also to the Egyptian vulture), it arrives in Egypt from Europe each autumn, when it is caught and served as a local delicacy. In the past, it was a frequent visitor to the area around the Sphinx, the reason why the village became known as Kafr el-Samman, which means something like the “settlement of the simman bird.” With the creation of the modern village during the early years of the twentieth century, the name was altered from Kafr el-Samman to Nazlet el-Samman (or Nazlet es-Samman), with the root nazlet reflecting the more affluent nature of the village.



45. Plan of the Giza plateau overlaid with the Cygnus stars personified as a goose. Notice the coincidental relationship between the eye of the bird and Bir el-Samman, which probably means “well of the simman bird.”

Exactly how long the autumn quail has been associated with Giza and its environs is unclear. It perhaps found shelter in the sycamore grove that surrounds the well Bir el-Samman, for quails are known to gorge themselves on fruit fallen from fig trees. Sometimes they eat so much they cannot fly, making them easy targets for those trying to catch them. Therefore, it is possible that the well is not named in honor of the holy man Hamid el-Samman, but the simman bird. On the other hand, the samman element of the saint’s name could have derived from an Arabic form of the personal name Simeon, or Simon, which, if correct, was presumably the name of the holy man’s father (thus Hamid, son of Simeon). However, the coincidence of his name tallying with that of the village, named after the simman bird, makes this solution seem less likely.

With all of this in mind, I was intrigued to find that although, in classical mythology, the bird of Cygnus was the swan (the Greek) which is seen to fly down the starry river we know as the Milky Way, in Arab star lore, the stars of this celestial bird formed something quite different. In addition to being Al Tā’ir al Ardūf, the Flying Eagle, and Al Dajājah, the Hen, it was also Al Katāt, a pigeon-sized “common gallinaceous game-bird of the desert.”⁸ Richard Hinckley Allen, in his indispensable work, *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning* (1899), offered the possibility that this was the “mottled partridge,”⁹ but the more obvious candidate is the quail, which has always been a common visitor to the deserts of the Near East, the Sinai peninsula and, of course, the Nile flood plains. Thus, in Arabic star lore, the bird that gives its name to Nazlet el-Samman would seem to have been represented in the night sky as the stars of Cygnus.

Cayce's Life Seal and the Three Swans

We must also revisit now Edgar Cayce's life seal, seen for the first time by America's "sleeping prophet" as he came out of a reading in 1924, the year before he began to focus his attentions on the Sphinx monument and the existence of the Egyptian Hall of Records. Originally, this design consisted of a well surrounded by three palm trees in a desert environment (first glimpsed during childhood dreams) as well as an outlined triangle seen as an abstract representation of the Great Pyramid.

In chapter nine, I offered the possibility that Cayce's life seal might in some way allude to the importance of the well Bir el-Samman in the search for an entrance to the Hall of Records. Yet the significance of the three swans it depicts remained a mystery. I now found it fascinating that three key Cygnus stars might well have influenced the placement of the Giza Pyramids. Could the three swans have symbolized, in Cayce's subconscious mind, the importance of Cygnus to the three pyramids, in the knowledge that in European star lore this constellation is seen as a swan flying down the Milky Way? Had this been another sign offered unconsciously by Edgar Cayce concerning the inner mysteries of Giza and, in particular, the search for the Hall of Records? It was an attractive proposition, if nothing else.

Finding the Deneb Spot

If the stars of Cygnus do match monuments on the Giza pyramid field, then a pressing question would be, where does Deneb, Cygnus's brightest star, fall on the plateau? Rodney Hale determined that its position corresponded with a large mastaba tomb, situated due west of the Great Pyramid and northwest of the Second Pyramid.

These sepulchral structures, benchlike in appearance (hence the name mastaba, Arabic for "bench"), are generally composed of solid blocks of limestone, with a tomb shaft accessed via their flat roofs and a tiny offering chapel cut into their eastern sides. All of them date to the Old Kingdom and thus are contemporary with the pharaohs responsible for the construction of the three main pyramids. Most mastabas were built for court officials, family members, and royal priests, who wished to be laid to rest alongside the god-kings to whom they had served in life.

In the proposed Giza-Cygnus correlation, the star Deneb corresponds to an enigmatic mastaba known as LG 14 (Lepsius-Giza # 14) in Giza's Western Cemetery, west of the Great Pyramid. Its appellation reveals that it was first cataloged by the German Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius (1810-1884) as part of his thorough exploration of the Giza necropolis in 1842-43. Nothing is known about its history or owner, for it bears no inscriptions and was already empty when Lepsius examined it.

In May 2005 I investigated the position of the Deneb spot in the proposed ground-sky overlay. I lingered among the mastabas of the plateau's Western Cemetery, attempting to grasp whether there really was something important about this quiet area of the plateau. I came away without any answers, not realizing that my undue interest in this locality would eventually lead to a very

important breakthrough in the search for Giza's subterranean realm.

For the moment, my focus would remain on Gebel Gibli, at the opposite end of the plateau, for it was on this same research trip in 2005 that I ended up discovering the well Bir el-Samman, and just for a while, any further investigation into the significance of the Deneb spot would be forgotten.

I needed to take a serious look at exactly what Cygnus might have meant to the ancient Egyptians during the Pyramid Age in order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between ancient Egypt's stellar-based funerary religion and Giza's lost underworld.

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The Light of Ascension

Inside the Great Pyramid are two chambers that probably hold the key to understanding the monument's ultimate function. One is the Queen's Chamber, entered at the base of the monument's magnificent Grand Gallery, and the other is the King's Chamber, which lies at the top of the Grand Gallery. Even though Arab accounts exist of the discovery of a body, bedecked with gold, armor, and jewels, found inside the King's Chamber's granite sarcophagus,¹ almost nothing is known about the true purpose of these two stone-lined rooms. They are now empty but for the sarcophagus in the King's Chamber.

Small, rectangular openings, cut into the north and south walls of both chambers in the Great Pyramid, mark the start of passages that penetrate the core masonry horizontally for a short distance and then climb at an angle toward the pyramid exterior. Those passages leading from the King's Chamber actually exit the pyramid (although whether they did when the casing blocks were in place is unclear), while those in the Queen's Chamber were sealed off at their point of commencement. Opinions about the function of these so-called air shafts vary. Some Egyptologists believe they were used in some manner for ventilation purposes during the construction of the pyramid.

A Stellar Connection?

Others see the air shafts, which are orientated either due north or south, as targeting specific stars as they cross the meridian on their upper transits, or the highest point they reach in their daily course through the night sky. The northern shaft of the Queen's Chamber is believed to target Kochab in Ursa Minor, the constellation of the Little Bear, while its southern shaft is thought to target the bright star Sirius.² In the King's Chamber, the northern air shaft is thought to target Thuban, a star in the constellation of Draco, the celestial dragon. More significantly, its southern counterpart in all likelihood targets Alnitak, the Orion belt star corresponding to the Great Pyramid in Robert Bauval's Orion Correlation Theory.³

Should a stellar connection with the air shafts prove meaningful, then the next question would be to understand the shafts' purpose. It has been speculated that they enabled the soul (ba) or spirit double (ka) of the deceased pharaoh to exit the pyramid. In the case of the southern shaft of the King's Chamber, this was so that the king's ba or ka might ascend to the constellation of Orion, where, in his role as Osiris, Lord of the Underworld, he would enter the hereafter.⁴ This is despite the fact that this particular shaft was blocked originally by a metal plate, built into the core masonry several courses back from the pyramid exterior. Just before reaching this point, the shaft was altered from a 45-degree ascent angle, arguably targeting Alnitak, to a horizontal position, the manner it exits the pyramid (see figure 46). Two slabs so far are known to block the course of the southern shaft of the Queen's Chamber, and no one will know what lies beyond these until the shaft is explored further using sophisticated robotic equipment.

FIG. 6.

EXIT OF SOUTH AIR CHANNEL.

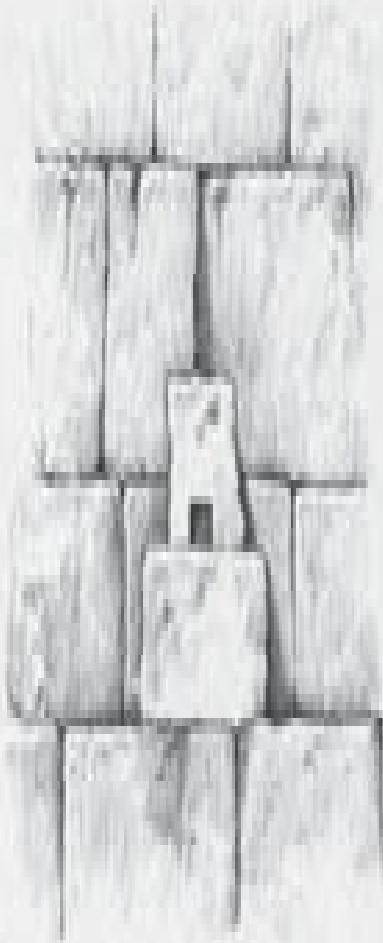
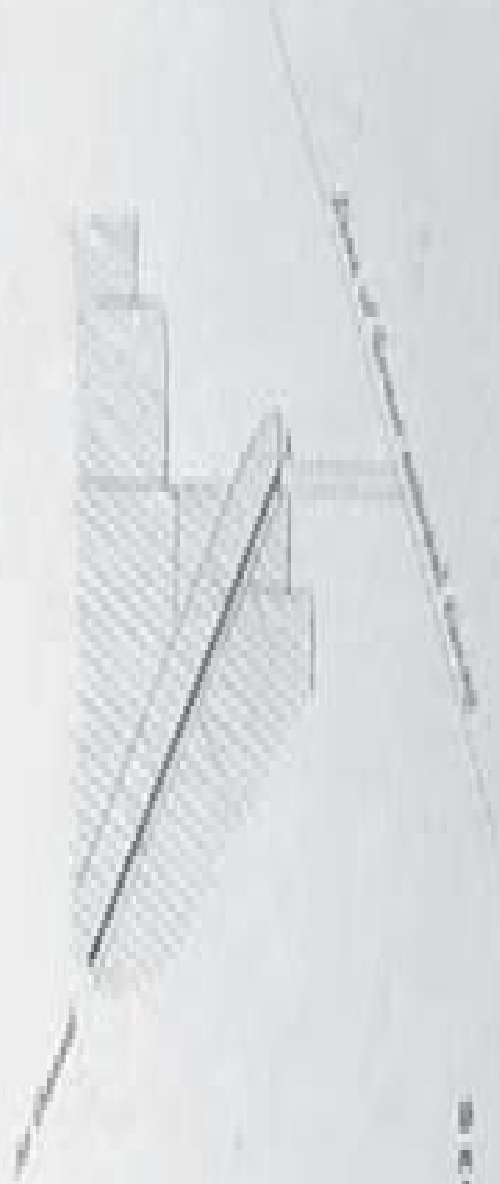


FIG. 8.

SECTION OF EXIT OF SOUTH AIR CHANNEL.



1870

46. Two illustrations by John Perring showing the termination of the King's Chamber's southern airshaft. The fact that it exited the pyramid in a horizontal manner tells us that any star alignments associated with the air shafts were purely symbolic and not actual.

Spectral Light

That some kind of astral function is behind the construction of the air shafts in the Great Pyramid is indeed possible, even though detractors have pointed out that the window of opportunity at which the air shafts would have targeted their respective stars falls outside the monument's assumed time frame of construction, c. 2600-2500 BC.⁵ If the stellar explanation is correct, however, then it seems reasonable to suggest that this connection with starlight was not to allow the soul or spirit double of the deceased to exit its earthly abode (for how could it have known in which direction to go, since there were two opposite air shafts in each chamber?). Instead, I suggest that the function of the shafts was to enable stellar light to filter into the chamber, on a symbolic level. This would then make sense of why the air shafts targeted four different areas of the sky, not simply one alone, and why sections of them were horizontal, for once the light was contained within the shafts, it would presumably have continued its course into the chambers, like water being carried down to the lowest point by the force of gravity.

Why multiple stars might have been targeted in the Great Pyramid is easy to understand, for it is likely that they reflected differing, or even conflicting, religious considerations prevalent when work began on this mammoth building project. Kochab in Ursa Minor was a near Pole Star in the Pyramid Age. Sirius rose heliacally at the time of the summer solstice and marked the commencement of the Nile inundation. It was also the star of the goddess Isis, the sister-wife of Osiris. Thuban was the closest star to the Pole Star at the beginning of the Pyramid Age, while Alnitak, along with the other stars of Orion's Belt, heralded the imminent appearance on the horizon of Sirius. Additionally, as a candidate for the star Sah of the Pyramid Texts, Alnitak became a destination of the deceased in his role as Osiris.

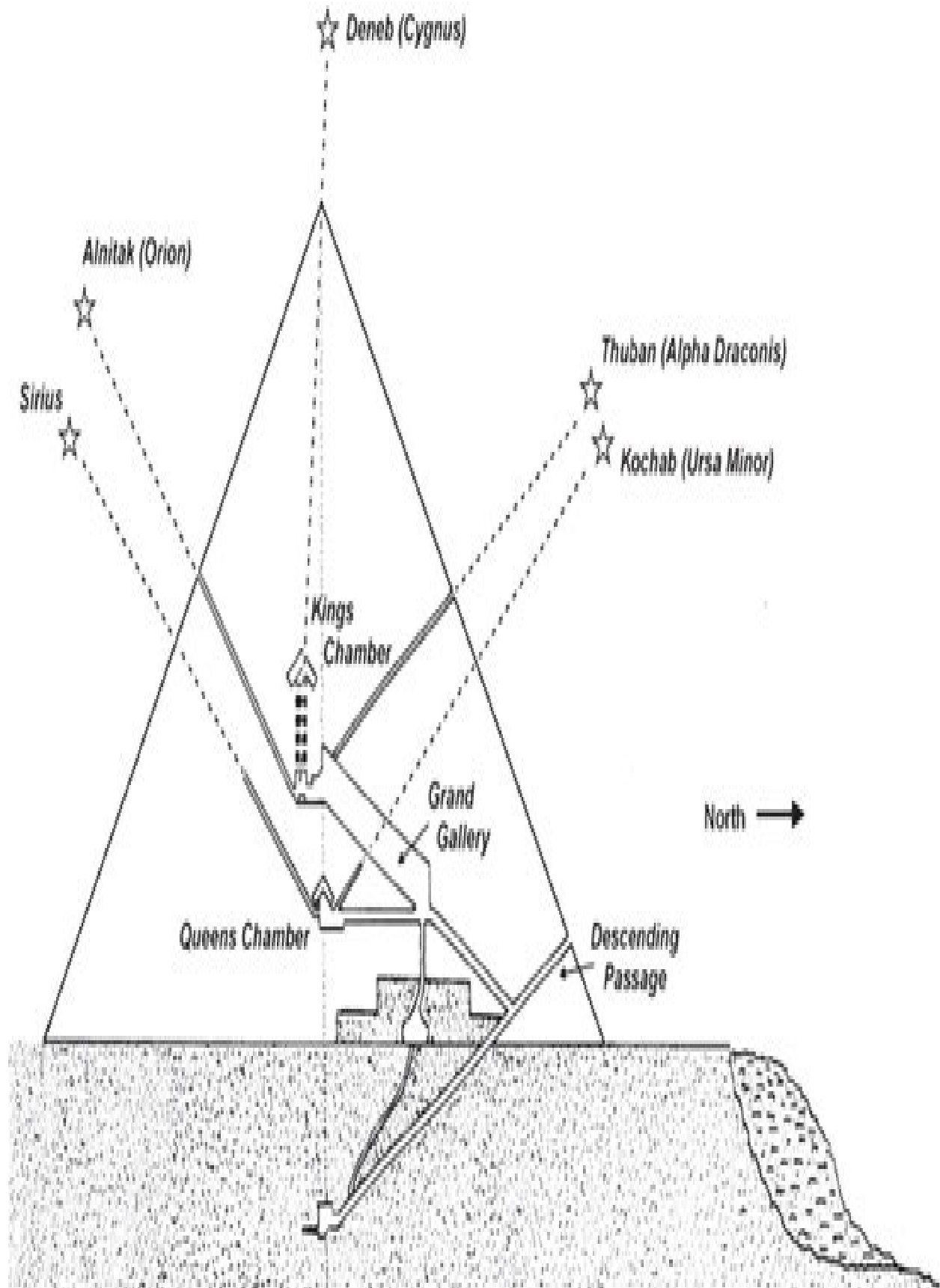
A Curious Misalignment

These four stars were important to the sky religion of the ancient Egyptians, of this there can be little doubt. Still, this did not tell us much about the precise function of the King's Chamber or Queen's Chamber, one of which, most likely the former, was intended to contain the earthly remains of the pharaoh. Yet there is something strange about the location of the King's Chamber that cannot be explained. This room is not positioned directly beneath the apex of the pyramid—it is offset toward the south by an estimated angle of 6 degrees, 15 minutes.

So, in the knowledge that the air shafts perhaps targeted stars, arguably in order to channel spectral light, I wondered whether the King's Chamber offset might reveal some hitherto unexplored astral function with respect to the Great Pyramid.

The Light of Deneb

To this end, Rodney Hale examined the night sky for 2600 BC and found that at the latitude of Giza, just one star crossed the meridian at an angle matching almost exactly the offset of the King's Chamber. This was Deneb, Cygnus's brightest star, which makes its transit at an elevation of 83 degrees, 48 minutes, or 6 degrees, 12 minutes north of zenith. This is just 3 arc minutes short of the King's Chamber offset (see figure 47). In 2600 BC no other bright star crossed the meridian anywhere near this angle, making Deneb's presence that much more difficult to ignore. (As we saw in chapter eleven, from a vantage point on Gebel Gibli, Deneb could have been seen to set down into the apex of the Second Pyramid following its construction in c. 2550 BC, seemingly confirming the significance of this star in the ancient Egyptian mindset.)



47. The Great Pyramid's proposed airshaft alignments toward prominent stars, along with a further alignment offered by the offset of the King's Chamber via the capstone toward the culmination of Deneb, Cygnus's brightest star.

What this means is that if someone were to lie in the sarcophagus that occupies the King's Chamber, feet toward the north and head toward the south, then once every day the star Deneb would have been "seen" to align almost perfectly with the pyramid's capstone, or pyramidion, which, in similarity to the apexes of all obelisks, was considered a representation of the Benben stone, and thus first creation.⁶ So if the four air shafts were themselves a means of targeting key stars in the night sky during the Pyramid Age, then there is every reason to suppose that the King's Chamber was deliberately offset from the monument's vertical center line (a line dropped from the capstone down to the ground) to target the stellar light of Deneb at its culmination. Clearly, this spectacle could never have been seen (at least not once the levels above the King's Chamber had been constructed), but then nor could the spectral light of any of the four stars targeted by the air shafts. The whole process was thus symbolic, a case of embracing the ancient Egyptian principle of ma'at—divine truth and cosmic order—within the absolute design and function of the Great Pyramid.

Passing Through a Star Door

The idea that the ancient Egyptians believed that starlight could, symbolically, be channeled through to the tomb of the dead is displayed perfectly by the image of an osiriform, or mummiform, figure in a standing position seen on the so-called second shrine from Tutankhamun's tomb (see figure 48). In the air is a typical ancient Egyptian image of a star (sba), from which emanate three "streams" of "cosmic energy" that hit the figure's head from his eyes to the top of his forehead. In front of him is a perch on which is a human-headed bird, a soul bird (ba), over which is the determinative hieroglyph for "walking." The word for star can also mean "door," thus the whole legend implies a "passing through a star door" or "time door."⁷ The presence of the winged soul suggests that it is the entry of this cosmic energy into the head of the deceased that catalyzes the process of transformation, enabling the metamorphosis to take place. It is almost as if the cosmic energy has to awaken the human body for it to remember its true identity as it was in the beginning, before the creation of the world.

In my opinion, the most crucial source of cosmic light "streaming" into the King's Chamber was that channeled via the capstone, aligned to Deneb. Evidence of this same astral process can be seen by the fact that in both the vertical and horizontal plane, the Giza Pyramids would seem to have reflected the astronomical positions of the Cygnus "wing" stars—Gienah, Sadr, and Delta Cygni—while, in the Pyramid Age, the star Deneb would have been seen to descend each night into the apex of the Second Pyramid as viewed from Gebel Gibli, which most likely functioned as a symbolic or actual primeval mound.

Cygnus's Pyramid Outline

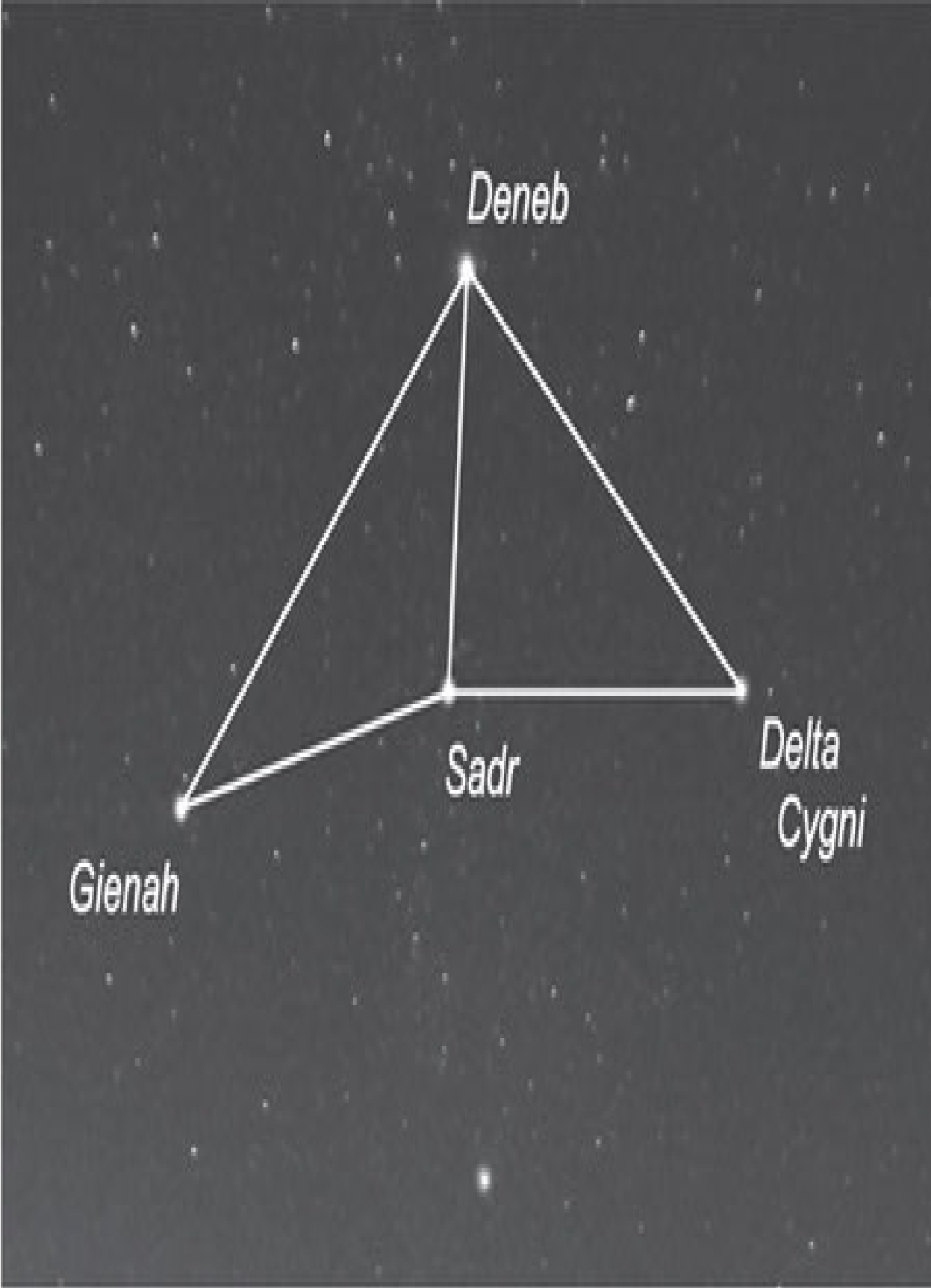
In addition to these compelling factors showing the apparent place of the Cygnus stars in ancient Egypt's sky religion, there is one other visual spectacle that cannot go unmentioned. Cygnus's four main stars—Deneb, Gienah, Sadr, and Delta Cygni—form the perfect outline of a smooth-faced pyramid as seen corner on. It is a simple statement, but one I feel has to be made. To achieve this view, start with Deneb and draw lines out to Gienah, Sadr, and Delta Cygni; then add two further lines—one from Gienah to Sadr and another from Sadr to Delta Cygni (see figure 49). Cygnus's appearance as a smooth-faced pyramid is most noticeable as it sets down into the northwest. Interestingly, in European star lore, these same four stars are known collectively as “the triangles.”⁸



48. Carved image from a coffin found in Tutankhamun's tomb showing stellar light channeled through to the forehead of the deceased in order for the metamorphosis into an akh, a "glorious spirit," to begin.

Userkaf's Sun Temple

That the pharaohs of the Pyramid Age were fascinated by the Cygnus constellation is borne out by the academic research of Dr. Ronald A. Wells, an American astronomer who in the 1970s studied ancient Egyptian grammar and history at the University of California-Berkeley's Near Eastern Studies Department and is today a computer resource specialist at UC Berkeley. Dr. Wells's work focused initially on the remains of two monumental structures thought to have been sun temples—truncated pyramids on which were built gigantic obelisks honoring Re, the sun god of Heliopolis, in his role as lord of creation.



Deneb

Gienah

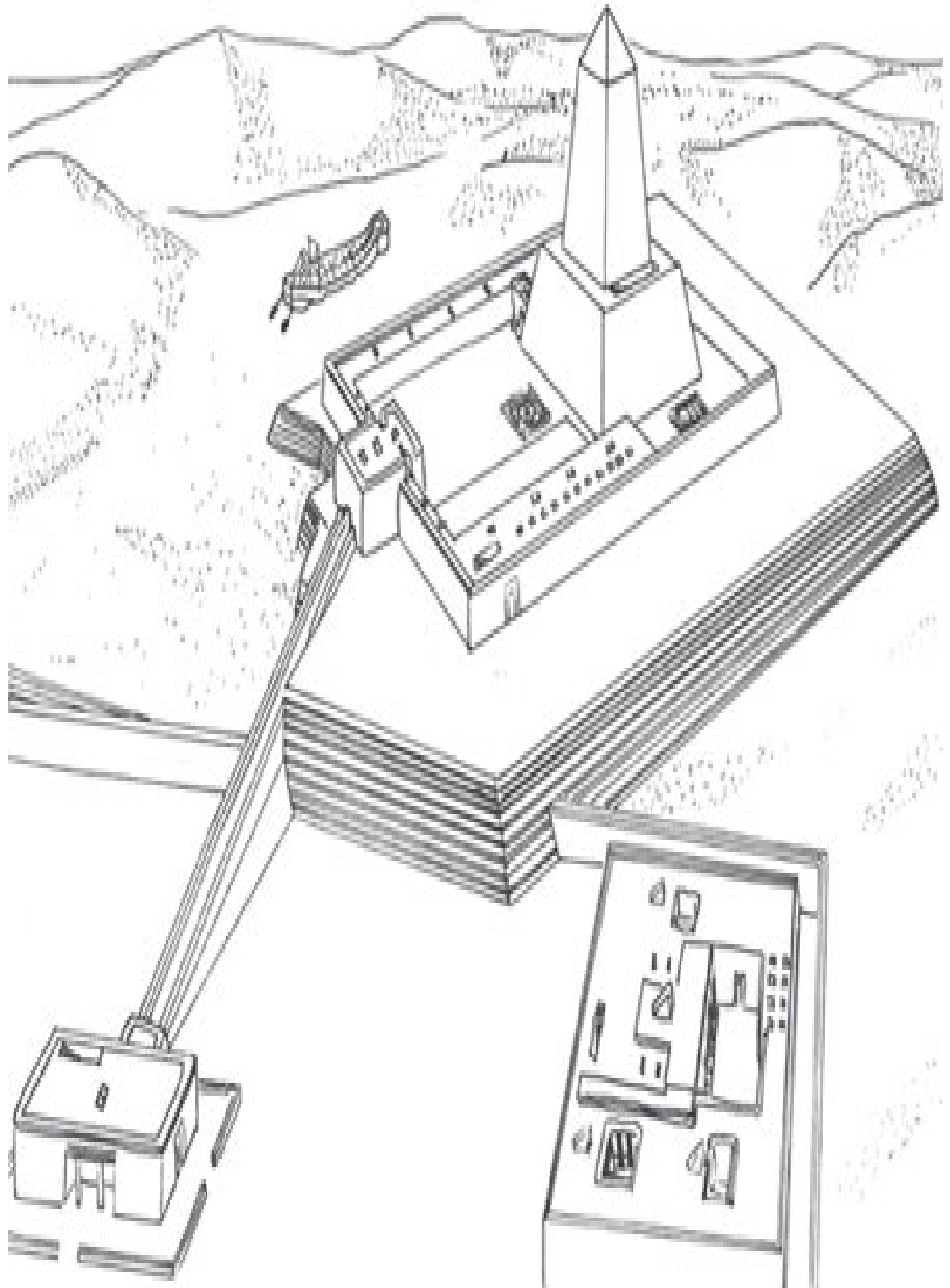
Sadr

Delta
Cygni

49. The four Cygnus stars known as the “Triangles,” forming the outline of a smooth-faced pyramid. To best visualize this effect, stare at Deneb, the star representing the capstone.

Located on the edge of the Libyan desert in a place called Abu Ghurob (just north of the pyramid field of Abusir, about seven miles (11 km) south of the Great Pyramid), they are the last remaining of six such monuments known to have been built in this area during Egypt’s Fifth Dynasty. One of these sun temples built for the pharaoh Niuserre (see figure 50), still presents commanding ruins, while the other example, constructed for Userkaf (the first king of the Fifth Dynasty, who reigned c. 2480-2473 BC), is today barely more than a heap of rubble rising above the desert floor.

Wells concluded that the lower, or valley, temple (attached to the sun temple of Userkaf via a long causeway) had in its heyday targeted a sequence of stars that rose shortly before first light. Each star was substituted by another of relative magnitude every 15 days. This is because a star rises exactly 3 minutes, 56 seconds earlier each morning owing to the rotational rate of the earth and its relationship to the sun with respect to the perceived motion of the heavens.⁹ In other words, a star that rises two hours before the sun will in just 15 days rise one hour earlier. It is a process that makes individual stars useless in any kind of long-term stellar calendar. Thus, over the course of a 360-day year (with 5 extra so-called epagomenal days added to the end of the year, when feasting and ceremonies would take place), Wells proposed that the priesthood affiliated with the sun temple utilized a sequence of twenty-four bright stars to create a kind of night calendar. This was in order to know the exact hour to begin preparations for the daily round of ablutions, prayers, and sacrifices, which would start at first light and continue until sunrise.¹⁰



50. Drawing of a Fifth Dynasty sun temple in the desert between Abusir and Giza; in this case, the one built by the king named Niuserre. Userkaf's sun temple would have been very similar.

Herald of the Year

The stars used for this stellar calendar were, according to Wells, those that in the course of a year rose in line with the axis of the sun temple's lower temple—this providing an orientation roughly toward the northeast.¹¹ Wells determined that the star chosen to start the calendar, which began around midwinter, was Deneb, with Sadr closing the year.¹² Other sun temples would, he proposed, have used different sequences of stars, owing to the “sacredness” of those chosen by previous kings and the wish of each sun temple to act independently of its rivals, bearing in mind that, once built, each complex operated simultaneously.¹³

A very similar stellar calendar, which also featured the stars of Cygnus, was used during the first millennium AD to instruct Christian monks on how to know the time of nocturnal prayers at any given time of the year. It involved noting the rise and progress of a sequence of fixed stars and constellations in a manner not dissimilar to what might have taken place at Userkaf's sun temple during Egypt's Old Kingdom period.

It was a system recorded by St. Gregory of Tours (544-595), a French bishop and historian, in a tract entitled *De cursu stellarum* (“On the Course of the Stars”), dated AD 592.¹⁴ What is important here is that this stellar calendar is thought to have been introduced into Europe from Egypt, where it was used by the earliest Christian monasteries.¹⁵ Thus it is possible that the first Christian communities in Egypt adopted this calendrical system from their dynastic forebears, perhaps even the priests of the sun god Re.

The Star of Userkaf

Even though Dr. Wells's astronomical theories regarding the sun temples in Abu Ghurob are generally ignored by mainstream Egyptologists,¹⁶ his ideas have stood the test of time. Indeed, they have been presented jointly to the Department of Near East Studies at UC Berkeley and the Northern California chapter of the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), the organization behind much of the archaeological field work in Giza, including the Sphinx Mapping Project.¹⁷

Should Dr. Wells's findings prove valid, then the importance during the Pyramid Age of the stars of Cygnus—Deneb and Sadr in particular—will have been vindicated. Beyond this is Wells's surmise that since the calendar led with Deneb, then this star must have held some special importance to Userkaf.¹⁸ This is a profound statement indeed, for Userkaf reigned just three generations after Khufu and a mere four years after the death of Menkaure, the builder of Giza's Third Pyramid.

It was following my own maniacal horse ride across the Libyan desert to reach Abusir, in order to check out the orientation of the lower temple attached to Userkaf's sun temple, that I came to discover the well Bir el-Samman in May 2005. I had stood among the temple's meager ruins and imagined the sequence of stars that had once risen in line with the building's orientation toward the local horizon. I saw no reason to doubt the conclusions drawn by Dr. Wells with regard to the existence of his stellar calendar, which utilized stars belonging to the Cygnus constellation to open and close the year.

Thus there seemed no good reason to doubt that Cygnus had played a major role in the stellar-based sky religion of the Pyramid Age, so much so that it may well have helped decide the placement of the Giza Pyramids. Yet if Cygnus had been

so important to the ancient Egyptians, how was it perceived by them? Certainly, it was not seen as a swan riding down the Milky Way, as it was in Greek and Roman mythology. Yet if one opens any scholarly book on ancient Egyptian astronomy, Cygnus barely gets a mention. Why is this, especially as it is such a prominent constellation and would appear to have been important in every other part of the ancient world?¹⁹ It was time to dig deeper in order to determine Cygnus's role in understanding Giza's lost underworld, and for this, we shall return once again to the groundbreaking research of Dr. Ronald A. Wells.

▪

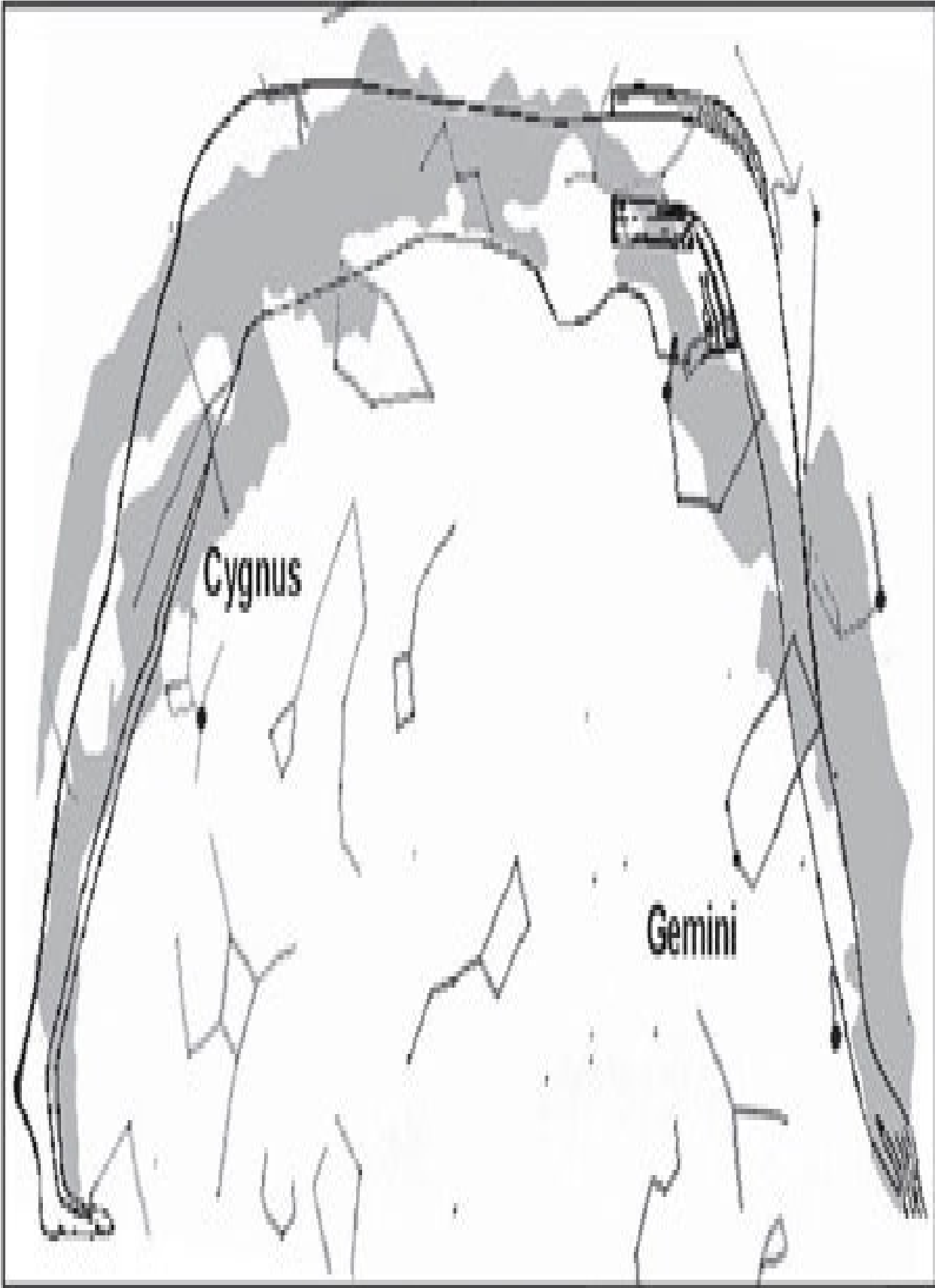
The Womb of God

“As above, so below” is an unerring axiom expressed in an age-old hermetic text known as the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus—the thrice great Hermes, the Graeco-Egyptian form of Thoth, the Egyptian god of writing and wisdom. It is a statement meant to convey the belief held by the ancient Egyptians that everything that happens in the heavens is mirrored in some manner down on earth and that the two mediums are inextricably linked and bound together for all eternity.

What this means to our understanding of Giza’s lost underworld is that only by comprehending how the Egyptian people who lived during the Pyramid Age viewed their relationship to the cosmos can we hope to gain a clearer insight into what awaits discovery beneath the pyramids. That the Pyramid Builders seem to have reflected the astronomical influence of Cygnus in the design of their monuments now becomes vital in determining what they themselves believed the Shetayet, the Tomb of God, or indeed the Underworld of the Soul, to be and why it was thought to exist underneath the earth itself.

The Body of Nuit

We must begin this exercise by gazing up at the Milky Way, the starry stream that forms the outer rim of our own galaxy. It curves across the night sky and bears an uncanny resemblance to a pale-skinned, naked woman reaching from one horizon to the other (see plate 19). In this manner the appearance of the starry stream is reminiscent of the way in which Nuit (or Nut), the ancient Egyptian sky goddess, is portrayed arched over the earth in ancient Egyptian art (see figure 51), a fact noted by American astronomer Dr. Ronald A. Wells.¹ Indeed, Nuit's entire form—with outstretched arms, downward-facing head, neck, torso, thighs, extended legs and feet—is suggested by the outline of the Milky Way between the constellations of Gemini on one side of the sky and Scorpio on the other.



51. The sky goddess Nuit personifying the Milky Way, with the Cygnus stars falling in the vicinity of her womb and genitalia.

From the Old Kingdom onward, Nuit was seen to forever swallow the sun at sunset and give birth to it again at dawn the next morning. It was the sun god's passage through her body that gave rise to the belief that during the hours of darkness it journeyed through the Duat, or underworld, which we have ascertained was seen to exist, certainly in part, beneath the plateau of Giza. This subterranean realm, named as Rostau, or the kingdom of the falcon-headed god Sokar, was thus synonymous with her body, within which the deceased achieved transformation into an akh, a glorious spirit or ascended being, at one with the stars of the northern sky.

Wells came to believe that the Duat's intimate connection with the body of Nuit preserved within it important information regarding the sky goddess's proposed representation in the Milky Way. This seemed especially so, since the sun's path crossed the starry stream in just two places—in the region marked by the stars of Gemini and again in the area occupied by the constellation of Scorpio. The positions of these two asterisms (i.e., star clusters or groups of stars) corresponded, respectively, to the sky goddess's perceived feet and mouth.

Following this same proposed outline for Nuit as the Milky Way, Wells noticed that the area marking the sky goddess's genitalia would have been located exactly where the starry trail appears to bifurcate, creating the two separate streams that form what is known as the Dark Rift, or Cygnus Rift, which is composed of a dense cloud of stellar dust, spread out along the galactic plane. As the name suggests, the Cygnus Rift begins in the region of space marked by the stars of Cygnus, with Deneb lying in the vicinity of the sky goddess's birth canal exit.² The area between her legs can then be traced as the two starry streams either side of the Cygnus Rift. These continue down to the vicinity of Scorpio, close to where the ecliptic, the sun's path, crosses the Milky Way. Here one of the streams fades out to become a "foot" of the sky goddess, while the other

stream then widens, marking the end of the rift.

After entering Nuit's "mouth"—the area of the Milky Way in the vicinity of the stars of Gemini—and moving through her "body," in its role as the duat underworld, the soul of the deceased as the sun god was born anew from the sky goddess's "womb," where the starry stream splits to form the Cygnus Rift. The sun would then have reappeared on the horizon at dawn in the area of the Milky Way that constitutes Nuit's feet (in the vicinity of the constellation of Scorpio), where the newborn child would have dropped to following birth. Thus we can begin to see why the Giza Pyramids were positioned to reflect on the ground the influence of Cygnus, since its cruciform cluster of stars marks not just the womb of Nuit in her role as the Milky Way, but also the place of birth of the sun god, with whom every pharaoh came to be associated, both in life and in death.

Swallowing the Sun

Yet Wells took the matter a stage further, for he realized that if Nuit was the personification of the Milky Way, then she could never have been seen in full. Always some part of her “body,” containing the duat underworld, would have been below the horizon. Thus the ancient Egyptian idea that the sun god passed through her body and was born anew on the eastern horizon could only have been played out periodically.

Taking the year 3500 BC as the probable start date for the genesis of such abstract ideas among the earliest Egyptians, Wells noted that at the time of the spring equinox, the stars of Gemini, marking the position of Nuit’s head and mouth, would have been seen shortly after sunset on the western horizon. The constellation would have been positioned immediately above where the solar orb had just disappeared from view,³ leading the observer, perhaps, to conclude that Nuit had just swallowed the sun.⁴ Afterward, this part of the Milky Way would itself have set, giving the added impression that her head and mouth had now withdrawn into the duat underworld, taking the sun with it.⁵

Nine months later, at the time of the winter solstice, the stars of Cygnus would have been seen to rise just prior to the appearance of the sun on the east-southeastern horizon.⁶ To anyone watching this magnificent sight, it would have seemed as if the sun god were being released from between the legs of the goddess. Wells noted also that two hours before sunrise on the winter solstice, Deneb would have been low on the horizon, precisely in line between the North Celestial Pole and the point where the sun was about to appear.⁷

Wells deduced that these alignments between the sun and the Milky Way synchronized only around the dates in question—the spring equinox and winter solstice. Moreover, he quickly realized that the number of days between them

was the exact time period of a typical human gestation—272 days.⁸ He thus concluded that the ancient Egyptians saw the sun god as having been conceived on the spring equinox and born anew at the time of the winter solstice—the reason why this auspicious date came to be known as *mswt Rc*, “the Birth of Re.”⁹ According to Wells, “Legend had the birth of the sun take place at this point because of its relationship with the womb of the goddess Nuit: that is, Cygnus/Deneb in the Milky Way.”¹⁰

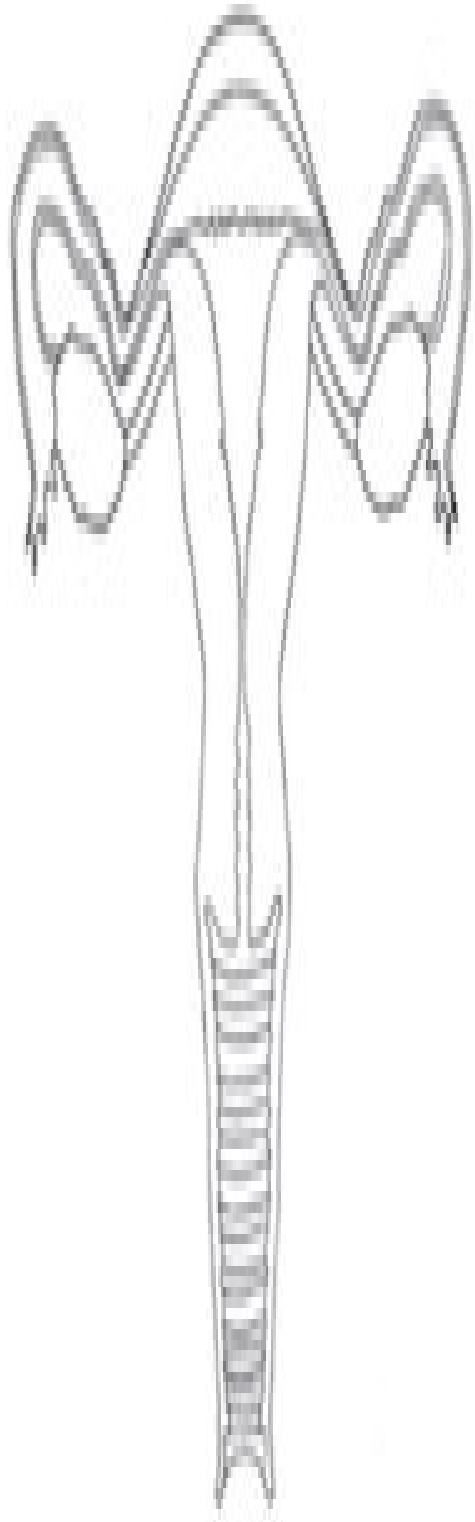
Bull of my Loins

It is a strange fact that the typical gestation period of a domesticated cow, like that of a human being, is 272 days. Such a powerful connection between our two worlds provides for a clear relationship between human and bovine reproduction, something that might well have been noted by those who introduced cattle domestication into the Nile Valley around 10,000 BC. Indeed, like her rival Hathor, Nuit was depicted as either a heavenly cow, with stars across the base of her belly, or as a woman wearing cow horns. Both are primary examples of a creatress, a cosmic mother and creator of the physical world, in the form of a cow.

So how did the Milky Way come to be personified as a sky goddess that was also a heavenly cow? The unexpected answer lies, I believe, in the curious fact that the human womb, or uterus, complete with fallopian tubes, bears an uncanny resemblance to the face of a long-horned bovine, something that prehistorian Marija Gimbutas felt was known to our earliest ancestors.¹¹ We need not ponder how our forebears might have come across this information, yet it is knowledge which suggests that what might be described as a cow mother, as the proto-form of both Nuit and Hathor, played a significant role in Egypt's earliest sky religion.

The Cygnus constellation is universally identified as a celestial bird of some kind. Yet, in ancient Egypt, all we can say with any certainty is that it was from the Cygnus region of the Milky Way, as the loins of the sky goddess, that the sun (either under the name of Horus or Re) was born anew following its passage through the duat underworld. Yet a knowledge of the likeness between the human womb (in this case, that of the sky goddess Nuit) and the face of a long-horned bovine unexpectedly throws new light on Cygnus's greater role in ancient Egypt's earliest sky religion and its association with the Edfu texts' concept of the Underworld of the Soul.

Look up at Cygnus as it sails down the Milky Way, and you will see that its nine brightest stars form the skeletal outline of a bovine face, complete with extended muzzle and long, curling horns. In other words, the Cygnus constellation has the appearance of both a bovine's face and the female uterus (see figures 52, 53, and 54). That the stars of Cygnus also mark the place of the womb and birth canal of the sky goddess when personifying the Milky Way simply compounds this symbolic relationship.



52., 53., and 54. Left, the female uterus, showing its likeness to the head of a horned bovine. In the middle we see a bovine skull overlaid with the stars of Cygnus. And right, an ancient Egyptian relief of a bovine's face surrounded by stars.

This striking cosmic symbolism would also have created the vision of a head or face of a newborn calf, suggested by the outline of the Cygnus stars, emerging from between the thighs of the sky goddess. If valid, then such ideas are likely to have been prehistoric in origin and recalled only in abstract form within stories and myths relating either to creation or the afterlife. Indeed, it might explain why, in the cult of Hathor, allied so closely to that of Nuit, the sun god was said to have been born each day as a white calf from between two sycamore trees on the eastern horizon. These sycamores, as expressions of Hathor in her role as a tree goddess and Cow Mother, were most likely the twin streams of the Milky Way created by the Cygnus Rift. Images showing the white calf emerging from between the two sycamores are depicted on the walls of tombs during the New Kingdom period.

All of this makes absolute sense of why the cow became a primeval symbol of birth and creation among Egypt's earliest cattle herders, such as the Neolithic communities peoples, who, between 9000 BC and 3000 BC, occupied Nabta Playa, the dry lake basin in the Western Sahara. Alongside the use of astronomically aligned stone monuments, such as the previously mentioned calendar circle and stone rows, they would seem to have revered the bull and cow as sacred animals, even sculpting large, stone slabs in their likeness and burying them underground.¹²

Once the Western Sahara changed from a savannah to a desert, around 3500-3000 BC, the Neolithic cattle herders of Nabta Playa entered the Nile valley and almost certainly influenced the development of pharaonic Egypt's creation myths, like those contained in the Edfu building texts. Here we read how the Bnnt embryo, which brought forth the first solid matter to emerge from the

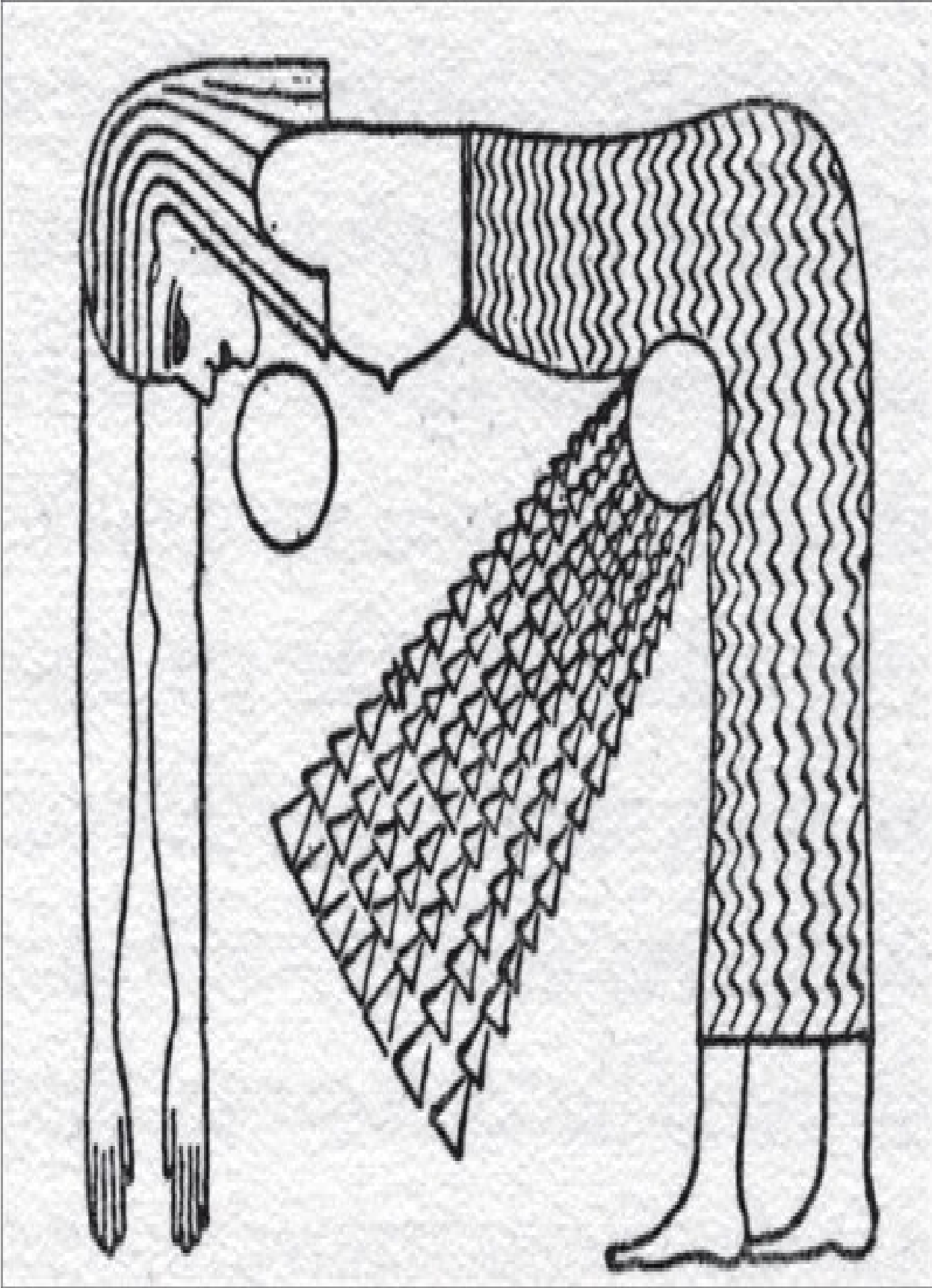
primeval waters, was fertilized by the Primeval Ones, who took the form of four pairs of bulls and cows to carry out this divine act. The people of Nabta Playa also probably influenced the development of ancient Egypt's earliest sky religion, which is perhaps why, even in Predynastic times, we see carved images of bull's faces surrounded by stars (see figure 54).



55. The sun god in the form of a celestial calf being reborn from between twin sycamores, perhaps representing the two streams of the Milky Way known as the Cygnus Rift or Dark Rift, which begins in the vicinity of the Cygnus constellation.

As abstract as such ideas may seem, I believe they should be considered, especially in the knowledge that in the Pyramid Texts, Geb—Nuit’s twin brother—is called “Bull of the sky,”¹³ while the sacred Mnevis bull of Heliopolis (with its main rival, the Apis bull of Memphis, being a form of Osiris) represents the sun-god Re. On top of this, the pharaoh bore titles such as “Strong Bull, Great of Strength” and “Bull of Horus,” while a bull’s tail was attached to the king’s girdle, a feature of the royal dress from the very start of dynastic history, c. 3100 BC.¹⁴

Both Re and Osiris were born of Nuit’s womb, while the falcon god Horus, in his form as the sun god, was delivered originally of Hathor, hence her name, which means the “House of Horus,” celebrating the womb that brought forth Horus. Since it was these three gods—Horus, Re, and Osiris—that the pharaoh associated with in life or in death, it is important to understand such concepts in relationship to the idea of the soul of the deceased returning to its maternal womb, for only then can we truly understand the role of the Shetayet, or Underworld of the Soul, in connection with Giza’s lost underworld.



56. The sun god Re being reborn from the cosmic womb of the sky goddess Nuit, corresponding to the stars of the Cygnus constellation.

The Womb of Nuit

In a hymn to Osiris found in the “Papyrus of Ani,” a form of the Egyptian Book of the Dead preserved in the British Museum, the soul of the deceased as Osiris is addressed as “the eldest son of the womb of Nut” (i.e., Nuit) and “he who from the womb of Nut hast ruled the world and the Underworld.”¹⁵ There is an emphasis in these statements regarding the fact that Osiris came from the womb of the sky goddess, and in death would return to Nuit’s celestial womb in order to achieve rebirth among the stars. To achieve this, the tomb itself had to become a symbolic womb, or birth chamber, synonymous with its cosmic counterpart in the vicinity of the Milky Way’s Cygnus Rift. Tellingly, a word used in ancient Egyptian funerary texts to denote the “body” of Nuit, *ihy* or *ahy*, also means “vulva” and “pubis,” showing that it is here that the soul of the deceased achieves rebirth.¹⁶

Prior to the Old Kingdom, human burials were made in a contracted, or fetal, position, emphasizing the idea of returning to the womb of the creatrix, or creatress, the original Cow Mother. It is most likely for this reason that as early as 10,000 BC the cores of cows’ horns were being placed in the earth immediately above graves in a Qadan cemetery close to the Nile in northern Sudan.¹⁷

The idea of Nuit’s womb becoming synonymous with the burial place is echoed in the Pyramid Texts. For instance, Utterance 364 reveals: “you having been given to your mother Nuit in her name of ‘Sarcophagus’; [for] she has embraced you in her name of ‘Coffin’, and you have been brought to her in her name of ‘Tomb’.”¹⁸ In other words, Nuit was seen as the embodiment of all three—sarcophagus, coffin, and tomb—within which the soul could return whence it had come, the cosmic womb located in the vicinity of the Cygnus stars.

Even the great authority on the Giza pyramids I.E.S. Edwards apparently came to believe that the granite sarcophagus in the King's Chamber of the Great Pyramid represented the body of Nuit.¹⁹ Thus the King's Chamber, with its sarcophagus, exists as a perfect expression of the sky goddess's womb, or birth chamber, in architectural form. No wonder, then, that the chamber's curious southerly offset from the pyramid's north-south center line enabled a symbolic alignment through the monument's capstone to the culmination point each day of Deneb, Cygnus's brightest star.

The Mysterious One

The original terrestrial representation of the cosmic womb, or birth chamber, of Nuit was the Shetayet, a statement demonstrated in one of the sky goddess's titles, which is "Shetayit." Egyptologist George Hart translates this as meaning the "Mysterious One,"²⁰ although more likely is that it expresses the inner mysteries surrounding the sky goddess's starry womb.

An examination of the ancient Egyptian language shows that the hieroglyphs used to create the words Shetayet and Shetayit derive from very similar roots, which also produce words with such meanings as "mystery," "something hidden," "hidden place," "shrine," "sanctuary," "secret chamber," "coffin," "sarcophagus," "grave tomb," and "cemetery."²¹ In addition to this, these same hieroglyphic sounds create the word for "vulture" (sheta-t),²² as well as Shetait, an epithet of Nekhbet, the patron goddess of Upper Egypt,²³ who was both a vulture goddess and Cow Mother, like Nuit and Hathor.

Why Cygnus in Giza?

That the Giza Pyramids appear to reflect a profound interest in the stars of Cygnus is, I suspect, a deliberate attempt to harmonize with the influence and believed presence underground of the Shetayet as the prototype terrestrial form of the cosmic womb of the Cow Mother, identified as either Nuit or Hathor. This was achieved, I believe, through a combination of trigonometry, astronomy, and a utilization of the musical scale in order to harmonize with the womb of space, expressed through the concept of Zep Tepi, the First Occasion. This was done in the belief that Gebel Gibli symbolized the primeval mound, the “of the Beginning of Time,” with the well Bir el-Samman at its base under the dominion of Hathor, Mistress of the Southern Sycamore, who was unquestionably a localized form of the Cow Mother.

The sight line that linked the Second Pyramid and Gebel Gibli with Kafr el-Gebel—the center point offered by the arc made by the Giza Pyramids—is, I feel, crucial in this geodetic expression of cosmic harmony. Since it targeted the setting of the Cygnus stars, Sadr in particular, the sight line was aligned perfectly with the cosmic womb, marked by the stars of Cygnus at the beginning of the Milky Way’s Cygnus Rift. In this manner the Pyramid Builders synchronized the cosmic womb with its terrestrial counterpart, the Shetayet, or secret chamber. Yet, to do this, the Pyramid Builders had to draw down the influence of the Cygnus constellation onto the plateau. If they did do so, then how might they have achieved this ground-sky synchronization, and what does it tell us about the construction of Giza’s subterranean world?

A Sky for the Underworld

Dr. Mark Lehner, writing on the manner in which Nuit was seen to swallow the sun at sunset and then give birth to it on the eastern horizon the next morning, states that this conception of her can only work if the rest of her body “was conceived as a sky for the Underworld.”²⁴ He goes on to remark that “this suggests that the sloping pyramid passages descending to the burial chambers were seen in fact as ‘ascending’ to Nut in the Netherworld.”²⁵ What he’s saying here is that the realm of the stars was reached not by going up into the sky, but by going underground to where the setting stars, representing the cosmic womb, received the souls of the deceased as Osiris, Nuit’s firstborn.

If Lehner is correct, then the Giza Pyramids were placed so as to reflect the astronomical positions of Cygnus’s principal “wing” stars after they had set on the horizon and were now moving beneath the earth. It is a supposition that makes absolute sense if an astronomical sky program is consulted. Just a few hours after the Cygnus stars had set in the northwest during the Pyramid Age, they would have assumed the approximate orientation of the Giza Pyramids as viewed from the south; for instance, from the perspective of Gebel Gibli. This, then, would have brought the cosmic womb, marked by the stars of Cygnus, into synchronization with the Shetayet, the prototype terrestrial womb chamber existing in Giza-Rostau’s own physical representation of the duat underworld.

The Marriage of Sun and Stars

Whereas the Sphinx likely represented the stars of Leo as they crossed the anti-meridian in the company of the midnight sun at the time of the summer solstice, the Giza Pyramids signified the stars of Cygnus exactly six months later, at the time of the winter solstice. At this time of year during the Pyramid Age, they would have set shortly after sunset and crossed the anti-meridian in the company of the midnight sun. Just a few hours later, the sun would have been born anew on the eastern horizon, close to where the Cygnus stars had risen shortly beforehand, the reason why the winter solstice was celebrated as the “Birth of Re.” Thus Leo and Cygnus would have been in direct opposition—when one constellation crossed the anti-meridian beneath the ground in the Duat, in the company of the midnight sun, its rival was transiting the meridian high in the night sky. Exactly six months later, the opposite would have occurred, with the constellation that had previously been in the underworld crossing the anti-meridian now high in the night sky, transiting the meridian, as its opposite number was in the underworld, in the company of the midnight sun. It was a perpetual motion that would have conformed to the principles of ma’at—cosmic order and divine truth, as well as the hermetic axiom of “As above, so below.”

This marriage between solar- and stellar-based beliefs obviously worked, for at the beginning of the Fifth Dynasty, if Dr. Ronald Wells’s theories are correct, Deneb opened the year in a star calendar used by the Re priesthood in Userkaf’s sun temple in Abu Ghurob, south of Giza. No wonder Dr. Wells concluded that Deneb must have held some special significance to Userkaf, for in his opinion this was

because Deneb (α Cyg), the brightest star in the Userkaf series, was considered most sacred—it marks the birth canal exit of Nut followed by the sun on the morning of the birth of Ra [i.e., Re]. Hence, it is quite logical that the first king of the dynasty to build an entire temple complex devoted to the sun would choose as the principal warning star that one from which Ra himself emerged.²⁶

Having established the greater importance of Cygnus in ancient Egypt's stellar-based religion, I now wondered whether the influence of its stars on the Giza plateau might offer any new information regarding the whereabouts of the Shetayet, the Underworld of the Soul, the prototype womb chamber of creation, in which both Sokar and Osiris are said to have been entombed. In the Giza-Cygnus ground-sky correlation, the three main pyramids reflect the astronomical positions of the stars Gienah, Sadr, and Delta Cygni as they pass beneath the earth. Yet what about Deneb, the brightest star in the constellation, which, according to Dr. Wells, marks the birth canal exit of the cosmic womb of space—why did it not mark a pyramid?

The matter puzzled me, and it was not until I presented my research findings to a colleague that I was given an unexpected insight into this baffling mystery. Having listened to my discoveries regarding the Giza-Cygnus correlation, he looked at the designated Deneb spot on the plateau and asked, "What's there?"

Nothing of any significance, I told him.

His response was somewhat tangential, for he just looked up and said, "Well, that's good isn't it?"

Not understanding his line of thought, I asked him to explain.

"Perhaps what you're looking for is underground, and no one has found it yet," he offered, quite matter-of-factly. "Perhaps it's the entrance to the Hall of Records."

I was not convinced, especially as I had pinned my hopes on finding an entrance to Giza's lost underworld via the well Bir el-Samman at the opposite end of the plateau. Yet little could I have imagined that what had been said that day would lead, finally, to the identification of a second entrance into Giza's lost underworld.



Part

Four

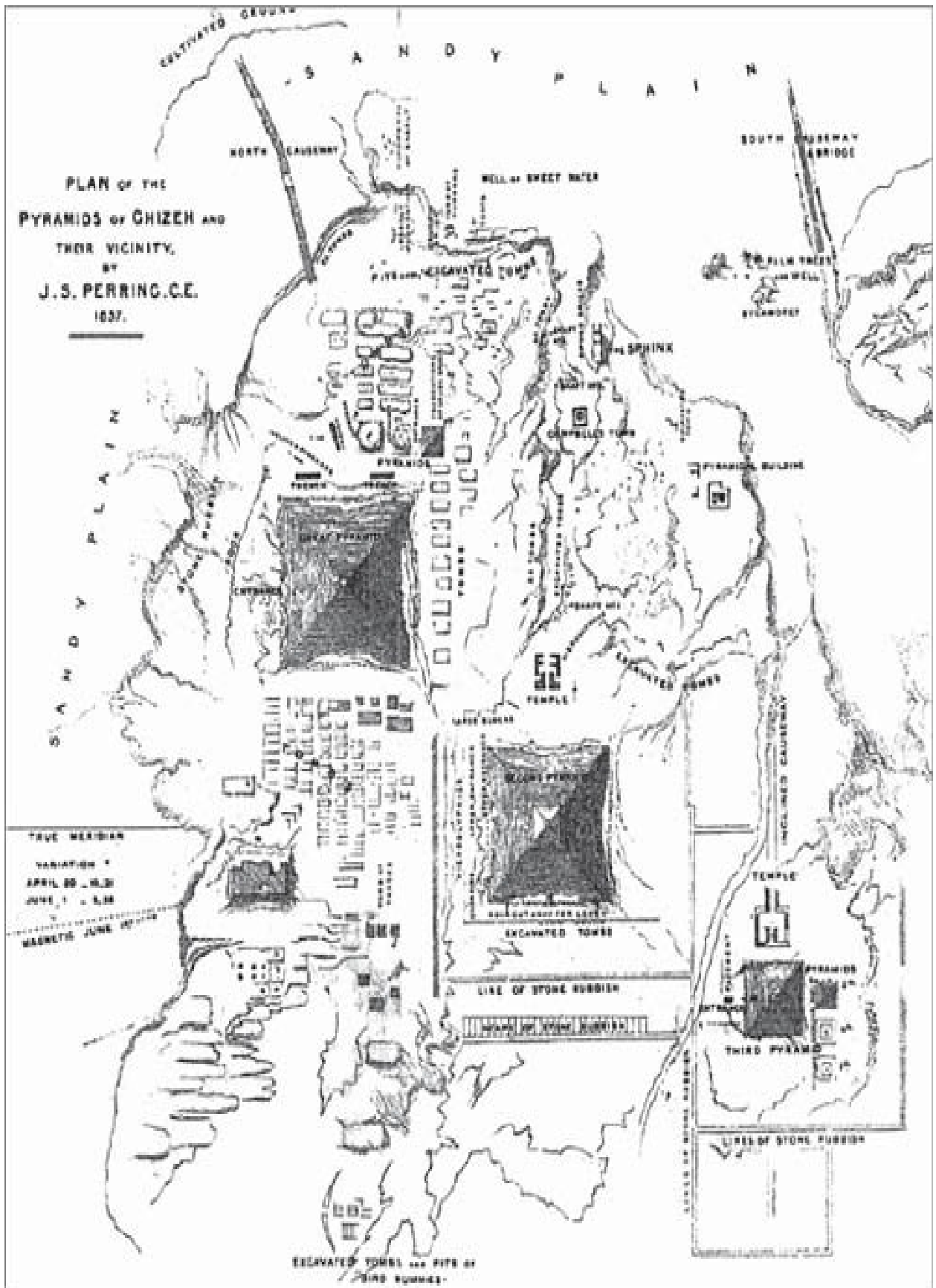
Discovery

▪

Tomb of the Birds

Even though nothing of any obvious significance had been found at the site marked by the star Deneb in the proposed Giza-Cygnus correlation, I kept a watchful eye on this area of the Western Cemetery, some five hundred yards (450 meters) west of the Great Pyramid. Then, one summer's day in 2006, my friend and colleague Nigel Skinner-Simpson, who for the past ten years had been meticulously researching the archaeology of the Giza plateau, dropped by with a wad of photocopies he felt might be useful to my research. Among them was a detailed plan of the plateau executed in 1837 by John Shae Perring (1813-1869), the British engineer, anthropologist, and Egyptologist who had worked alongside Colonel Richard William Howard Vyse (1784-1853), an English army officer, anthropologist, and explorer, during his often heavy-handed investigation of the Giza monuments.

PLAN OF THE
 PYRAMIDS OF CHIZEN AND
 THEIR VICINITY,
 BY
 J. S. PERRING, C.E.
 1837.



EXCAVATED TOMBS AND SITE OF
 SAND RUBBISH.

57. British engineer John Perring's plan of the Giza plateau, published in 1840. Note the site of "Excavated Tombs and Pits of Bird Mummies," at the bottom of the map.

Perring's plan of the pyramid field had appeared at the beginning of Vyse's *Operations Carried on at the Pyramids of Gizeh* in 1837, the first two volumes of which were published by James Fraser of London in 1840 (the third and final volume appeared two years later in 1842). It shows the entire plateau and is unquestionably a bold attempt at recording every monument and feature the two men encountered as part of their enthusiastic investigations.

Not having seen the plan before, I looked toward the Western Cemetery for Lepsius-Giza #14, the mastaba marking the Deneb spot. Having found this, I was immediately drawn to the escarpment that marked the northern extremity of the Moqattam formation, the geological bedrock on which the plateau is situated. In the middle of one very distinct, crescent-shaped bluff was a dark square, indicating the presence of a north-facing tomb entrance cut deep into the cliff face; while immediately to the south were drawn a series of east-west-orientated chambers, all linked together by a north-south-aligned corridor. These structures were obviously not separate tombs, and reflected something beneath the bedrock accessed via the rock-cut entrance.

Tombs and Pits of Birds

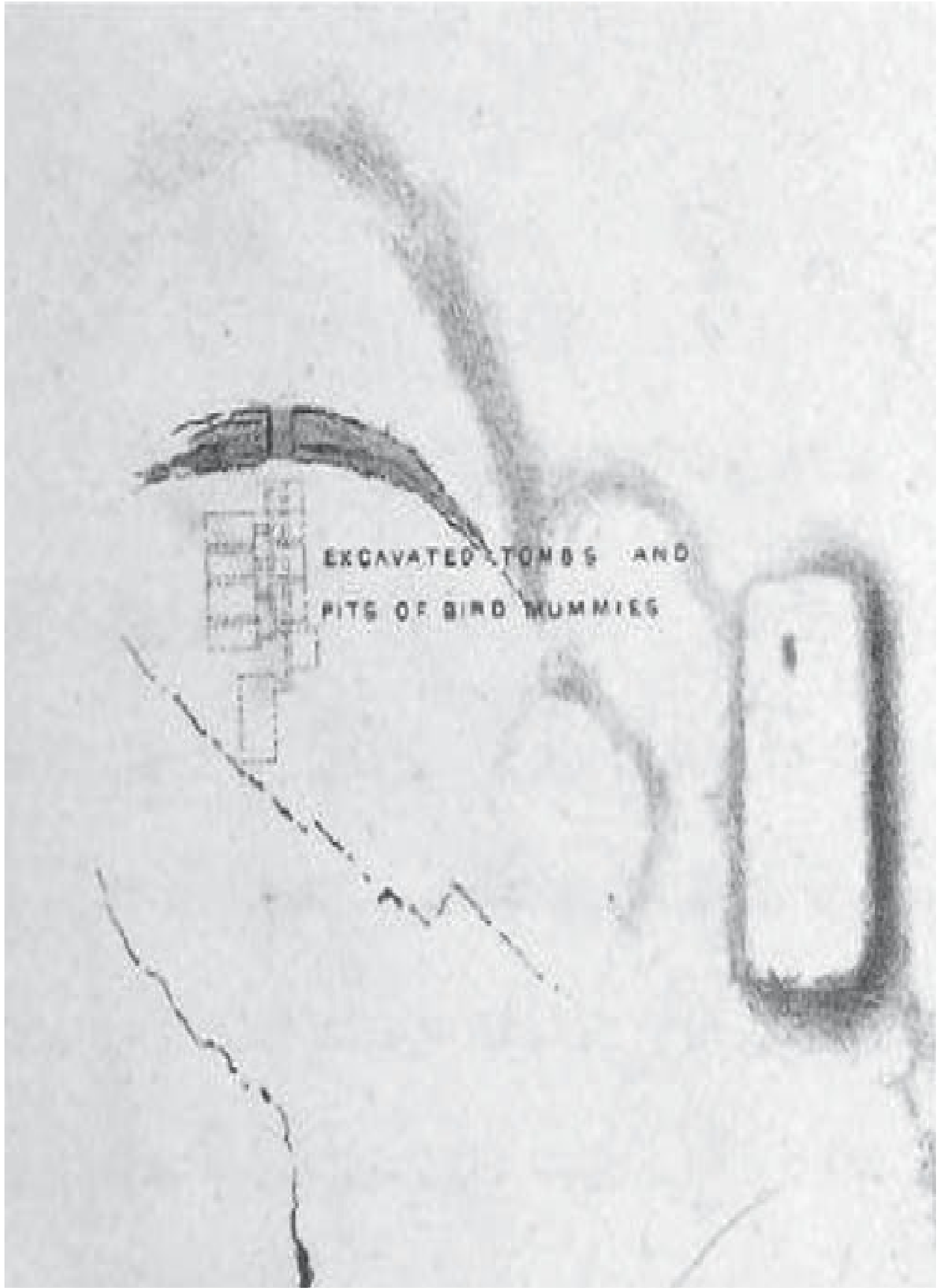
None of this should have aroused my curiosity had it not been for the legend next to the square-cut tomb, which read: “Excavated Tombs and Pits of Bird Mummies.”¹ Even this might not have raised an eyebrow had I not already concluded that the influence of the Cygnus constellation was reflected on the plateau within the layout and design of its three main pyramids. Since its stars were universally seen as a celestial bird, perhaps this previously unknown bird cemetery might provide further clues about why the asterism would appear to have played a key role in the placement and construction of the Giza Pyramids.

Enormous, subterranean bird necropolises have been unearthed in nearby Saqqara. These have produced many thousands of mummified avian remains, with species including raptors, such as falcons and hawks, both forms of Horus and Re, and ibises, the totem of Thoth, the god of writing and wisdom, whose cult was associated with that of Imhotep, the divine architect of Djoser, builder of the Step Pyramid. The ibis cemetery in Saqqara almost certainly prospered in the belief, prevalent during Egypt’s Late Period and Ptolemaic times, that nearby was the tomb of Imhotep, who was worshipped as a form of Thoth.²

I had not previously come across the idea of a bird cemetery in Giza, and in the knowledge that the falcon cemetery in Saqqara extends underground for several hundred yards, I became eager to learn more about what Vyse and Perring might have discovered in the escarpment beyond the Western Cemetery in 1837.

Perring's Folio Plan and Vyse's Report

Nigel Skinner-Simpson now sought out Perring's folio plan of the plateau, which showed the tomb's rock-cut entrance, as well as its interior chambers, in better detail.³ These structures, which now included four, and not three, east-west-orientated chambers, were drawn using a dotted line, seemingly confirming that they existed beneath the bedrock. They appeared to be linked via an opening in their east walls to a north-south-aligned corridor that began at the tomb entrance. Two other chambers were shown, one to the southeast of the corridor, and another, much larger one, to its southwest.



EXCAVATED TOMBS AND
PITS OF BIRD MUMMIES

58. Section of John Perring's folio plan showing a clearer impression of the "Excavated Tombs and Pits of Bird Mummies" seen on the published plan of 1840.

Vyse's report on his exploration of the tomb was tracked down by Nigel. This turned out to be frustratingly brief, yet intriguing in its content. It forms the entry in Vyse's diary for May 3, 1837:

Portals and sepulchral chambers had been formed in the northern ridge of the mountain (westward of the Great Pyramid). The entrance of one of the largest was supported by square pillars, and contained a mummy pit. The interior consisted of two ruined chambers, which had formerly been adorned with painted stucco, but were filled with the sands of the desert. A staircase descended from these apartments to a lower range of excavations and shafts, where fragments of mummies, and of embalmed animals were to be found beneath the sand. Part of a large bird, which had been preserved with great care, was brought out. The footsteps of wild beasts, the sole tenants of these deserted sanctuaries, were everywhere to be seen.⁴

The assertion made on the plan that the tomb, with its accompanying excavations, shafts, and "mummy pit," had been a bird cemetery was borne out by just one reference to "part of a large bird" being carried out. That the plural "bird mummies" had been used on Perring's plan indicates that other mummified carcasses were found. This was frustrating, although most likely Vyse simply chose not to elaborate on the matter, since it was of little consequence to the desired goals of his explorations.

The Lost Tomb

Nigel was unable to find any more information about this mysterious tomb and its contents, and curiously, the structure does not appear in any standard reference work, such as the comprehensive *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings*, compiled by Bertha Porter and Rosalind L. B. Moss and updated 1974-1981 by Jaromir Málek.⁵ What this implied is that no one would seem to have followed up Vyse's report of his explorations at the tomb or made a detailed record of the tomb's description and measurements. This seemed a strange oversight, one that made me determined to find out more about this enigmatic site.

Alerted to our newfound discoveries, technical engineer Rodney Hale accessed a high resolution satellite image of the plateau and determined that the entrance to the bird tomb was still clearly visible. In size, it was cut into the rock face to a depth of 20 feet (6.2 meters), with a facade as much as 16.5 feet (5 meters) in width. As to position, it was situated approximately 820 yards (750 meters) due west of the Great Pyramid's western face, in line with its apex, and an estimated 306 yards (280 meters) northwest of the Deneb spot. Thus, in the knowledge that the structure did still exist and might be reached with a little effort, Sue and I made plans to visit the plateau as soon as possible.

Journey Across the Plateau

The opportunity came finally on Sunday, January 28, 2007. Having hired camels, we entered the plateau via its southern perimeter in the company of a young camel driver, who rode alongside on a donkey. We passed by Gebel Gibli to our right before descending the steep slope that marks the edge of the Maadi formation, the ridge of hills that overlay the plateau's bedrock along its southern extremity. We then continued on past the Third Pyramid and headed out toward the northwest corner of the Western Cemetery. After passing the open-air theatre, where the opera Aida was performed on various occasions, we used the aforementioned satellite image to locate the site we were now calling the Tomb of the Birds.

Riding camels to our final destination, which necessitated an uncomfortable journey of up to an hour, might appear a little eccentric, and yet the alternative of trudging across the desert sand in the hot sun brings with it a plethora of unwanted problems. Even though, with a tourist pass, visitors can explore much of the plateau, above ground at least, straying from the main paths can lead to some sticky situations. As every inquisitive visitor to the plateau will know, anyone doing almost anything out of the ordinary risks being questioned by tomb guardians, antiquities officials, or the tourist police. You can be lucky, of course, and not be stopped for questioning. It is all just the luck of the draw. Fortunately, our journey went uninterrupted on this occasion, and we reached our destination without incident.

The Tomb Found

The camels were led down the escarpment forming the northern edge of the plateau, at which I signaled for the driver to let us down. The Egyptian youth coaxed the animals to the ground, leaving us to explore on foot. We searched immediately for any tomb entrances and soon came across one cut into the bedrock within the low cliff face. Crouching down, I crawled through its opening into the rubbish-filled interior, which consisted of a single room, open to the elements, with a raised rectangular area at its rear, just large enough to fit the outstretched body of a human being. Nothing else of any interest could be discerned.

This was surely not the tomb explored by Vyse and Perring, as it was clearly too small. Having drawn this conclusion, Sue and I continued our investigation of the cliff face, moving slowly westward. Some seventy yards (63 meters) farther on we came across a much grander, rock-cut tomb entrance with an ornamented facade and doorway. It was situated on a rocky ledge facing out toward the smog-laden urban sprawl of northern Cairo.

After removing some of the sand and debris blown into its open doorway, I was able to slide down into the tomb as Sue watched on from the entrance. It stank heavily of guano—bat droppings. Inside I found myself in a spacious, double-lobed antechamber, in the middle of which was a pair of badly worn, square-cut pillars, leading the eye between them into a long, north-south-running corridor. On the walls of both sides of the antechamber were a number of mailboxlike slots (see figure 59), approximately 12 inches (30 cms) to 15 inches (38 cms) in length and going back into the bedrock for perhaps 4 to 5 inches (10 to 12 cms). They had obviously been used to deposit something, most likely mummified birds, as well as reptiles and small mammals, such as the shrewmouse, interred as offerings to a local bird deity.



59. The strange slots in the walls of the antechamber within the Tomb of the Birds, perhaps meant to hold bird mummies.

Continuing along the corridor, I passed two small, rock-cut alcoves at ground level, one on either side facing each other, and came eventually to a side chamber off to the left. As with the rest of the tomb, it was bare of any details, although its roughly cut walls did show evidence of having once been covered by a lime whitewash.

Just beyond the side chamber in the main corridor was a raised, stone floor going all the way back to its rear, where I came across a stone “bed” carved out of the bedrock and spanning the entire width of the corridor. In many ways it resembled an altar of some kind. However, I was pretty sure that this had not been its original function—it had clearly been cut to the size of an outstretched human body. Within the wall, directly above the “bed,” was another incised slot, this one much larger, perhaps 2.5 feet (75 cms) in length and 5 inches (12 cms) in height and depth. Much later, Nigel was to discover that similar wall slots are to be seen inside the falcon cemetery in Saqqara, confirming that those in Giza’s Tomb of the Birds might once have contained mummified birds. Nigel noted also the similarity between the rock-cut entrance into the falcon catacombs in Saqqara and the slightly ornamented facade cut into the rock here.⁶

As to the age of the structure, I could not even guess, since it was unlike anything I had come across before on the plateau. In my opinion, the tomb’s deep-cut entrance and stone “bed” at its rear bore a marked similarity to rock-cut sepulchres I have seen in and around Sogmatar, in southeast Turkey. These were constructed for the royal elite of a Syrian dynasty that ruled the nearby cities of Edessa (modern Sanliurfa) and Harran during Roman times.

In addition to this, there were no traces of any hieroglyphic inscriptions

anywhere in the tomb, something that is uncharacteristic of most ancient Egyptian tombs from the Old Kingdom onward through to Roman times. Usually, they display either carved or painted inscriptions honoring the dead and giving instructions on how to reach the hereafter. Plausibly, the bird tomb might have contained, as Vyse implied, stucco, or plaster, friezes that bore inscriptions. But if so, then these must have been destroyed long ago.

Axial Orientation

With the handycam running, I explored the tomb's rock-cut platform and side chamber but found nothing that might throw any light on the whereabouts of the "tombs and pits" explored by Vyse and Perring in 1837. Before leaving, however, I determined the structure's orientation, which I found to be 2 degrees, 19 minutes east of north (recalculated from the magnetic bearing). Why was there such a deviation from true north—sloppiness on the part of the builders? It was possible, although the fact that the structure was aligned toward a clear sight of the circumpolar stars seemed somehow relevant.

After taking a few final shots of the tomb, I rejoined Sue, who had remained at the entrance. We quickly found the young camel driver and remounted the animals with the express wish of departing the area in order to avoid any unnecessary hassle. Fortunately, we were left alone, and soon reached the Great Pyramid, where we were quickly lost among the other tourists visiting the plateau that day. Having dismounted from the camels and sent them on their way, we noticed a large falcon hovering directly above the summit of the Great Pyramid. It remained there for about fifteen minutes before flying across to the Second Pyramid and taking up a position above its summit. The bird then returned to its original position above the Great Pyramid, where it remained until we left the area. Never before had I seen such a spectacle in Giza, making it a welcome sign for the success of our venture.

Pythagorean Geometry

After returning to England, Nigel and I wrote a report on what was known about the Tomb of the Birds,⁷ and there the matter had rested. Then, some months later, Rodney Hale sent me his latest attempts at understanding the underlying geometry of Giza. This included the very basic 3:4:5 triangle (presented in chapter ten) that embraces Gebel Gibli, the north-south datum line, along with the Sphinx monument and the apexes of the Great Pyramid and Second Pyramid.

What struck me most about the extent of this Pythagorean triangle was that its northwest corner reached to within fifty-five yards (50 meters) due east of the entrance to the Tomb of the Birds. This realization also meant that the site was the same distance away from the sight line making up the triangle's hypotenuse, or longest side, which marked the setting of the Cygnus "wing" star Sadr as viewed from Gebel Gibli. Therefore, prior to the construction of the Second Pyramid, c. 2550 BC, someone standing on Gebel Gibli could have watched Sadr set down into the vicinity of the Tomb of the Birds, positioned just fifty-five yards (50 meters) away from the point on the local horizon marking the position of its extinction.

For some reason, the Tomb of the Birds had very quickly taken on a significance beyond that of any normal tomb. Yet I sensed we were missing something—a vital piece of the jigsaw that, when found, would reveal why this site had become a bird cemetery, presumably in honor of a local bird deity. Once more, it was Nigel Skinner-Simpson who came to the rescue, not only finding that missing piece of the jigsaw but also leading us to the very door of Giza's lost underworld.

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The Lost Catacombs

It began with a chance discovery as far back as August 2003, three years before we learned of the existence of the Tomb of the Birds. While at the British Library, searching for new information on old excavations in Giza, Nigel Skinner-Simpson had come across a dusty tome entitled *The Life and Correspondence of Henry Salt, Esq. F.R.S. &c* by one J. J. Halls, Esq, published in 1834. Little did he know that a single paragraph it contained would lead, eventually, to the rediscovery of Giza's hidden underworld, lost for almost two hundred years.

The Henry Salt in question was the artist, traveler, diplomat, and Egyptologist born in Lichfield, England, in 1785. After years of exploring parts of Africa, he was appointed British consul general to Egypt in 1815, a position he held until his untimely death, just outside Alexandria, in 1827. Salt's great passion was the collection of Egyptian antiquities, which he sought from every part of Egypt and the Sudan by employing the services of foreign explorers who were authorized to act on his behalf. In this manner Salt was able to sponsor a number of high-profile excavations. Among his greatest achievements was the securing of a giant stone head belonging to a colossus of the pharaoh Rameses II, which was removed from the Ramesseum in West Thebes and sold to the British Museum. He also acquired the sarcophagus of Rameses III, which was purchased by the Louvre in Paris. In addition to this, Salt amassed an impressive collection of several thousand Egyptian artifacts, which were sold off in lots, with most of the items going to the aforementioned institutions.



60. Henry Salt (1780-1827), British counsel general to Egypt, an avid collector of Egyptian antiquities and the co-discoverer of Giza's lost catacombs.

Within two years of his appointment as British consul general, Salt had turned his attentions to the monuments that graced the Giza plateau. To this end, he sought out the services of an Italian adventurer and former sea captain named Giovanni Battista Caviglia (1770-1845), who shared his passion for finding and securing Egyptian antiquities. Even though Salt was at the time working also with Italy's more famous explorer and Egyptologist Giovanni Belzoni (1778-1823), responsible for the removal of the head of the colossus of Rameses II from West Thebes, it was Salt's work with Caviglia that now became important to our investigations.

Exploration of the Sphinx

Having arrived in Alexandria at the end of 1816, Caviglia immediately began working for Salt, clearing away the sand that had engulfed the body of the Sphinx since Roman times. Why the two men chose to zoom in on this area of the plateau remains uncertain, although it is likely that they were influenced by rumors of hidden chambers and buried treasure lying somewhere in its vicinity. Stories of this kind originated mainly from pseudo-Egyptian initiations, like the one featured in *The Magic Flute* (*Die Zauberflöte*, in German), the Freemasonry-inspired opera of Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), first performed in Vienna in 1791, Paris in 1801, and London in 1811.

Not only does the hero of the opera have to undergo a series of ordeals within the darkness of an Egyptian “temple,” but the Sphinx, in the form of a dragon, has to be defeated—all very reminiscent of the type of trials that the ancient Egyptians expected the soul of the deceased to undergo in the underworld. Interestingly, the stage set for the Garden Scene (Act II, Scenes 7-12) of *The Magic Flute* shows a moonlit night in which the Sphinx monument sits upon a temple located on an island, surrounded by water, presumably the Nile. This set (created in 1815 by German architect and painter Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 1781-1841), based on the opera’s Egyptian initiation, brings to mind the oval island supported by the double-headed Aker lion in the Fifth Hour of the Am-duat text and, of course, the whole concept of the island of creation in the primeval waters of Nun.

Such pseudo-initiations into the Egyptian mysteries were re-created in the lengthy tract penned by the French scholar Jean-Baptiste Pitois (1811-1877), under the nom de plume Paul Christian, and later published as a lost work of Iamblichus, the third-century Syrian Neoplatonist and philosopher.¹ Pitois’s vivid portrayal of an initiate being led blindfolded into subterranean chambers beneath the Sphinx, where the wisdom of the ancients is finally revealed, fooled a generation and unquestionably influenced nineteenth- and early twentieth-

century thought on the significance of hidden chambers existing beneath the Sphinx monument.

In the six months that Caviglia spent excavating the Sphinx enclosure, no record that he found hidden chambers has been preserved (elsewhere, both Nigel Skinner-Simpson and I have countered recent claims that the Italian explorer entered a secret chamber containing hieroglyphics located inside the back of the monument²). Caviglia did, however, make some memorable discoveries, including a three-foot-long (1 meter) piece of the monument's beard (almost certainly added long after its construction), bought subsequently by the British Museum, as well as the Dream Stela, erected between the paws of the Sphinx during the reign of Thutmose IV (see chapter five). Caviglia went on to explore the interior of the Great Pyramid, clearing the workers' tunnel between the Grand Gallery and Descending Passage.

“Labyrinthian Passages”

For better or worse, it is because of these acts that Salt and Caviglia’s names have endured among the modern Egyptological community. However, the 1834 biography of Henry Salt that Nigel read in 2003 contained information on other lesser-known activities that the two men had undertaken during this period, including the investigation of previously unknown catacombs located somewhere beneath the plateau. The brief, but compelling, paragraph in question reads:

The next undertaking of Caviglia was to examine the catacombs in the vicinity of the Pyramids. Those to the west of them do not appear to have possessed any peculiar interest; he and Mr. Salt entered some few, but found them too uninviting to induce them to prosecute their research; and though Captain Caviglia subsequently penetrated into one of the many labyrinthian passages observed, to the distance of three hundred feet, yet he met with nothing to compensate him for the attempt.³

Nigel wanted to know more about these “labyrinthian passages” explored by Salt and Caviglia in Giza, so he made some enquiries in an attempt to better pin down their whereabouts. All he knew was that they lay to the “west” of the main pyramid field.

Nigel was unable to make further headway with his research until the publication of Salt’s memoirs, which had languished unnoticed in some forgotten corner of the British Museum’s archive library for over one and a half centuries. Realizing their significance, museum archivist Dr. Patricia Usick had worked with historical writer Deborah Manley to prepare them for publication. They appeared, finally, in 2007 under the title *The Sphinx Revealed—A Forgotten Record of Pioneering Excavations*, a copy of which Nigel obtained at the British

Museum. On reading Salt's memoirs for the first time, Nigel came across just one entry concerning the catacombs explored by Salt and Caviglia. Although frustratingly brief, it was loaded with extraordinary facts:

Respecting the Catacombs marked ["Q.Q."] to the west of the Pyramids, I have little to say. We entered into one, and followed up our researches through rude and craggy vaults, several hundred yards into the rock, creeping at times on our hands and knees, among the bones, and carcasses of camels and other animals carried there by the hyenas, which frequent these caves. At last we entered by a forced passage through a thin wall into a spacious chamber, which presented nothing to our view, but bare and mouldering walls. This chamber communicated with three others of equal dimensions, whence issued many labyrinthick passages, which had too intricate and uninteresting an appearance to induce us to advance. Captain Caviglia informed me that he afterwards advanced in another direction, three hundred feet farther but found nothing to tempt him to continue his researches.

The Portals to these Catacombs, are ornamented externally, and one of them, may be seen, from the path, before you mount up the hill on which the pyramids stand.⁴

Nigel realized that Salt and Caviglia had found and investigated "Catacombs" that stretched not for "three hundred feet," as the Salt biography had implied, but several hundred yards, before the two men had apparently broken through "a thin wall into a spacious chamber" that linked with three others "of equal dimensions." Beyond even these were "many labyrinthick passages" that advanced in other directions, one for "three hundred feet farther." (Emphasis mine.) Yet, because nothing of any import or value was found, the two men had decided against venturing beyond this point.

The Search for Area “Q.Q.”

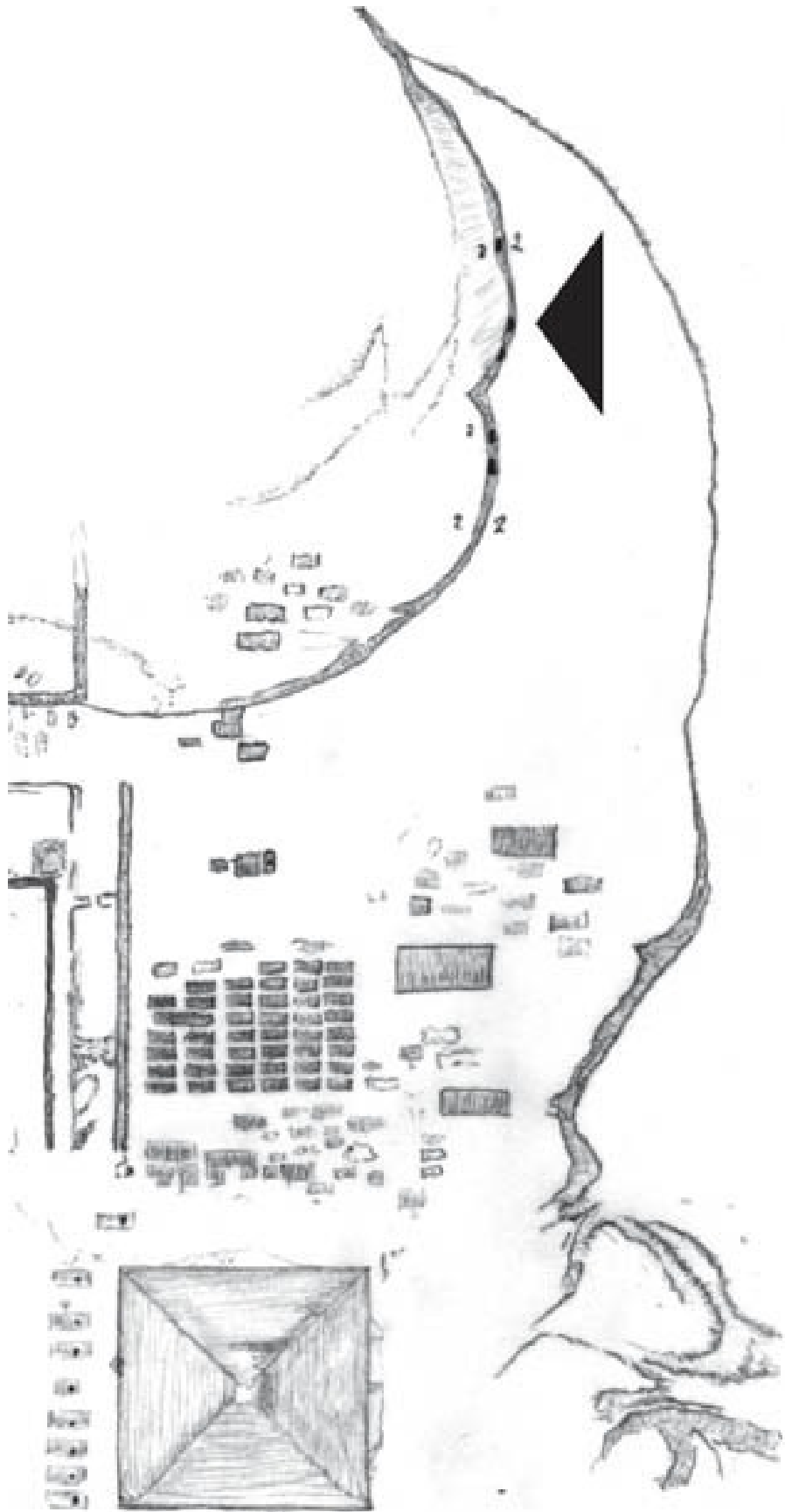
The entry in Salt’s memoirs stated that the catacombs explored existed to the west of the Pyramids and were marked “Q.Q.” on his plan of the plateau, published along with his memoirs. In his references down one side of the plan, Salt had written “Q-Catacombs, entering many hundred feet into the rock and very extensive like those in Alexandria.”⁵

With regard to the whereabouts of the catacombs,” Usick and Manley had commented: “Catacombs marked Q.Q. = probably the rock-cut tombs of cemetery G1600. PM III(2), Part 1, 65 and plan XVII.”⁶ Presumably, this had been a conclusion drawn by the editors on being unable to find “Q.Q.” on the plan.

Dozens of features appear on Salt’s plan. In some places double characters are employed to mark out areas, such as “A.A.,” “B.B.,” “C.C.,” and so forth. Salt meticulously recorded them all in his references, but according to Usick and Manley, area “Q.Q.” was missing, only its listing being present.

Not ready to accept that Salt had forgotten to mark area “Q.Q.” on his own carefully drawn plan, Nigel set about finding and cross-referencing every letter key. After all listings other than “Q.Q.” had been found and matched up with their corresponding location, one final search zone remained. It bore virtually unreadable double characters that looked like double twos—“22”—which bracketed a group of five tomb entrances along an east-west-aligned escarpment some eight hundred yards (0.72 km) west of the Great Pyramid. Obviously, the “22’s” were in fact “Q.Q.’s,” meaning that the true location of the catacombs had been found. Not having realized the significance of the “22’s” on the plan, Usick and Manley had concluded that search area “Q.Q.” was in fact some distance to the northeast in a cemetery known as G1600, which was entirely wrong.

Nigel now realized something significant about search area “Q.Q.” on Salt’s plan: It embraced the crescent-shaped bluff within which was the entrance to the Tomb of the Birds. Thus there had to be a good chance that the bird tomb explored by Vyse and Perring in 1837—and rediscovered by Andrew and Sue Collins in January 2007—was synonymous with Salt and Caviglia’s lost “Catacombs.”



61. Section of Henry Salt's plan of the Giza plateau highlighting the search area "Q.Q." beyond the northern limits of the Western Cemetery. An arrow has been introduced to indicate the approximate position of the Tomb of the Birds.

Nigel told me what was going on as we sat in a café opposite the British Museum, following a visit to the library attached to the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan on May 10, 2007. Despite voicing his caution about reading too much into these discoveries, I became convinced that the Tomb of the Birds was the entrance to the catacombs, even though we had obviously failed to realize this on our visit there just four months earlier. Yet Nigel pointed out that there were no less than five tombs embraced by area "Q.Q.," offering the possibility that any one of them might conceal a hidden cave entrance.

I tried to imagine what Salt and Caviglia might have discovered back in 1817. The scientific team headed by Abbas Mohamed Abbas had in February 2006 used ground penetration radar (GPR) to confirm the existence of a number of deep cavities beneath the Giza bedrock, and some of these would appear to have led into much larger hollows that might well have contained hewn chambers. Was it possible that the catacombs discovered by Salt and Caviglia reached beneath the central part of the plateau and linked up with a network of cave tunnels that did indeed lead to hewn structures of some kind?

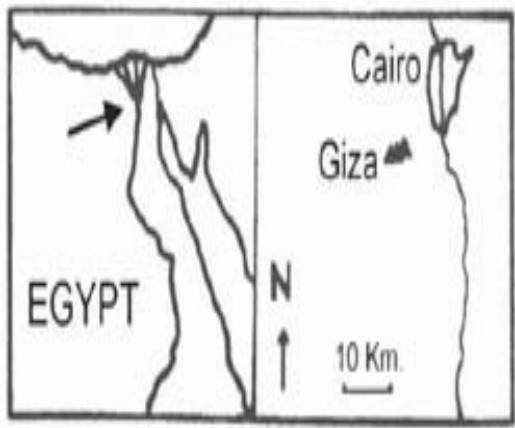
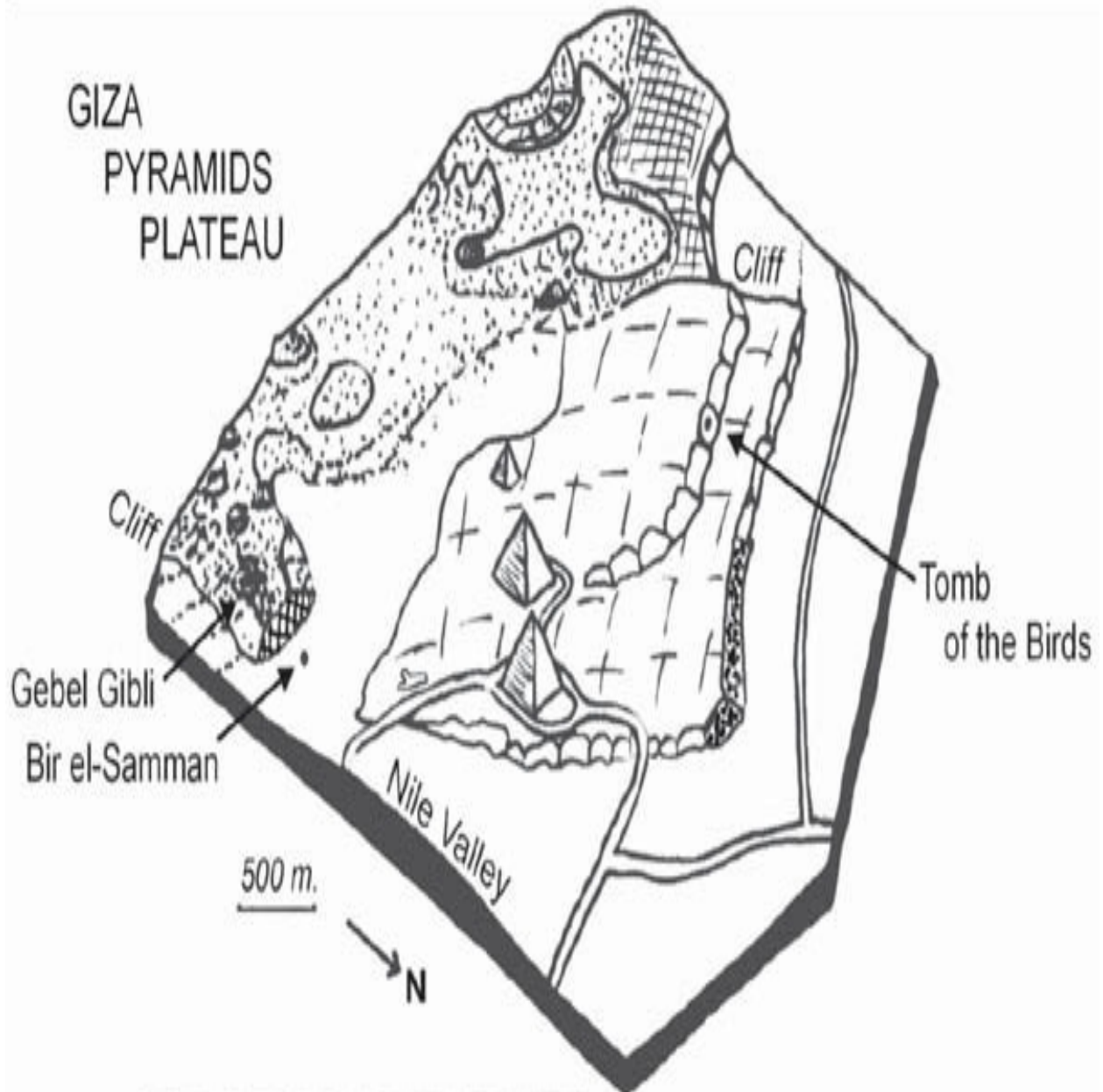
Perhaps the caves followed the northwest to southeast orientation of the Moqattam formation, the limestone bedrock on which the plateau is situated. If so, it would mean that the catacombs reached beneath the Second Pyramid before continuing on toward the well Bir el-Samman and the north face of Gebel Gibli. As Giza's southern mount, it marks the northern edge of the plateau's other main hill ridge, the Maadi formation (beneath which the Moqattam formation dips in order to continue its course in a southeasterly direction). Thus the existence of a cave system in Giza should not come as any surprise. Yet the implications of its discovery were immense, for if the cave chambers explored by Salt and Caviglia had been enhanced by human hands, then they could help

explain why stories of secret chambers and hidden realms existing beneath the plateau have persisted for so long.

Obviously, Nigel, Sue, and I made the decision to try to relocate Salt and Caviglia's lost catacombs, but we realized this time that we could not do this alone. We would need the assistance and backing of some kind of official body that could assist us in our work in Egypt.

The A.R.E. Comes On Board

From the mid-1970s until the present day, the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.), the active branch of the Edgar Cayce Foundation, has supported a considerable number of scientific expeditions on the plateau of Giza (see chapter three). It has also helped launch the careers of such high-profile Egyptologists as Dr. Mark Lehner, who has gone on to write important books and articles on the origins and development of the Giza pyramid field.



-  Pliocene
-  Ain Musa bed
-  Maadi formation
-  Moqattam formation
-  Alluvium

62. Geological plan of the plateau (after Aigner), showing the relationship between the Moqattam formation on which the plateau sits and the overlying Maadi formation to the south, which terminates in the east with the rocky knoll Gebel Gibli.

Over the years, I had become a regular speaker at A.R.E. headquarters in Virginia Beach, lecturing on ancient Egypt and other allied subjects. I had also become a friend to the organization as well as a supporter of the work of its mentor Edgar Cayce. Not that I believed unequivocally in his views, readings, or predictions. However, I had come to understand his extraordinary talent as a psychic and human being. It was for these reasons that I was encouraged by my friends Greg and Lora Little (life members of the organization) to submit a proposal to the A.R.E., requesting sponsorship of a tentative investigation of the Tomb of the Birds and the surrounding tombs, with a view to obtaining further information regarding the whereabouts of Salt and Caviglia's enigmatic catacombs. This investigation would take the form of observational fieldwork in our capacity as visitors to the plateau.

A proposal was thus submitted, and on October 7, 2007, following a lecture I presented on the subject of the Hall of Records at the A.R.E. headquarters for their annual Ancient Mysteries Conference, I discussed the matter with A.R.E. director John Van Auken, who oversees the organizations' archaeological research of the Giza plateau. He informed me that the committee in charge of funding new projects had agreed in principle to help support the venture. Yet, even then, red tape meant that Nigel, Sue, and I would not get the go-ahead to make the necessary preparations for the expedition until the beginning of 2008.

Having been given the green light, flights were booked, hotel reservations made, and telephone calls put through to Egypt so that our guide and taxi driver, Hussein el-Mor, would be on hand to help wherever possible. This was not going to be an easy trip, as we realized that we would have to try to reach the Tomb of the Birds without any unnecessary problems. It was not a case of breaking any

laws, for tourists can, in theory, visit the mastaba tombs of the Western Cemetery. We merely wished to explore the tomb unhindered, in the hope that we might be able to throw better light on Salt and Caviglia's explorations in the same area.

We left for Egypt on Saturday, March 1, 2008, knowing that the next few days could be life changing in their implications. Perhaps not unnaturally, the thought of attempting to reach the Tomb of the Birds free from any hassle evoked a sense of dread within us. We knew full well that if we failed in our task, we might never get another golden opportunity like this to solve such a beguiling mystery. We just hoped and prayed that the gods would be with us on our journey.

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Wonderful Discoveries

Monday, March 3, 2008. The plan was once again to take camels from Nazlet el-Samman and enter the pyramid field via the plateau's southern perimeter. However, unknown to us, this route was no longer accessible owing to a tightening of security, meaning that we had to pass through a checkpoint on the southern edge of the village. All went well; our camel driver, Saad, was waved past the sentry box, and the slow journey began in the mounting desert heat. We curled around the heights of Gebel Gibli before descending onto the plateau, passing the Third Pyramid, to our right, and then heading out toward the escarpment beyond the Western Cemetery, where the Tomb of the Birds can be found.

As the animals navigated the escarpment, an elderly Arab-Egyptian in head scarf and traditional galabeya came out of nowhere and stopped us in our tracks. He was clearly not happy by our presence and made this known in no uncertain terms. A heated discussion then ensued between Saad and the angry man, who we realized was a local guardian set up to watch over the tombs by the antiquities service.

Our guide conveyed to us that we did not have permission to be in this area of the plateau. Frowning, I told him to tell the man that we simply wanted to take a look at the tomb, no more. After some time, the guardian, whom we shall call Ahmed (a pseudonym; first name on file), finally agreed to permit us entry.

Inside the darkness of the tomb, away from the bright sunlight, Nigel, Sue, and I

inspected every alcove and recess in the hope of finding an entrance into the catacombs explored by Salt and Caviglia. My best shot was the side chamber off to the left at the end of the long corridor. Reviewing video footage of our previous visit in January 2007, I had noticed a curving shadow at the base of the south wall, and this, I felt, might conceal an entrance into a lower level of side chambers, like those shown on Perring's plan. However, an investigation of this room revealed no such entrance, meaning that we were essentially out of ideas and that by far the best line of enquiry was now to inspect the other tombs along the escarpment, one of which might conceal an entrance into the caves.

The Hole in the Tomb

Still wishing to investigate the tomb further, I climbed onto the raised, rock-cut platform at its rear and walked toward the stone bed carved out of the bedrock. At its base on the right-hand side, I saw at ground level a small opening within a mud-brick wall, breached long ago and easily missed if you did not know it was there. With Sue by my side, I shined a torch through the irregular-shaped hole, which was no more than 3.5 feet (1 meter) in height. What I saw and felt will remain etched in my mind for the rest of my life. The hole opened out into a vast cave chamber, some 32 feet (10 meters) square and partially hewn in an attempt to make it appear more rectilinear. The stench of guano was overpowering, and almost instantly, large bats, disturbed by the torchlight, began exiting through the hole. The room seemed massive, really massive, with a floor well below the level of the tomb. A narrow platform just inside the doorway enabled us to peer into this vast open space, which seemed full of fallen rock debris.

Suddenly the realization of what was going on overtook me. Oh, my God, we had found it—the entrance to Salt and Caviglia's lost catacombs! No other answer could explain what we were now witnessing. Despite the euphoria, this place looked dangerous. Yet I knew I had to explore these caves. I simply had to do it. So, while Nigel remained in the tomb with the guardian, Sue stood by as I started to make the slow descent upon the rock debris to the level of the floor, with only a small torch to penetrate the absolute darkness.

Once at ground level I investigated further, even though breathing was noticeably difficult because of the thickness of the airborne guano. In the northwest corner was an opening into a north-south-aligned compartment, natural in origin, which, like the main chamber, was filled with rock debris. I stood within its entrance, shining the torch back and forth without going too much farther. It did not seem to go anywhere, so I returned to the entrance chamber. I then noticed another opening, this one within its southern wall. To enter this, I had to lower my head and move along in a crouched position, before

the ceiling opened out to reveal a long cave passage, its sunken floor filled with huge rocks, making progress hazardous in the extreme.

Suddenly a warm breeze heralded the imminent arrival of a whole flight of bats that forced me to duck as they passed just inches away from my head. They were making an exit, no doubt disturbed by my presence in their natural habitat.

This was actually quite scary stuff, a consideration that prompted me to consider turning back. Yet, before I had a chance to do so, Saad appeared by my side and started advancing farther into the cave tunnel. Invigorated by his apparent lack of fear, we walked together across the rocks, some as large as six feet (2 meters) across and two feet (60 cms) thick. As we continued, I noticed on either side natural alcoves and side chambers, which I gave only a cursory glance as we moved slowly forward for a distance of about ninety yards (80 meters). All the while, I watched out for any unseen pits or vertical shafts, which if not seen in time might have resulted in a terrible fall.

In front of us now, I could dimly make out that the corridor appeared to split into two separate paths, with one direction leading to a dead end. Yet, as we neared this fork in the cave passage, I suddenly felt a warm breeze coming from out of the darkness and knew what this meant—more bats were attempting to exit the cave.

I shouted for Saad to get down as bats flew directly over our heads. Thinking that there were no more to come, I then stood up only for another bat to hit me full in the face. It knocked me flying, causing me to yell out, making our guide nervous. I was okay, with no scratches, but the whole incident disorientated me, and seeing that Saad had now turned around to head back, I decided that enough was enough and that we should get out of there.

After a journey of about fifteen minutes, Saad and I finally reached the entrance chamber. The air inside the caves was clogged with both dust and guano. The farther along the cave tunnel we got, the worse it was, so we were obviously quite relieved when we saw the hole leading into the Tomb of the Birds, which allowed in slightly cleaner air as well as a little light. How Salt and Caviglia could have gotten to a distance of “several hundred yards” before deciding to give up was beyond comprehension.

Afterward, both Nigel and Sue joined me in the catacombs’ entrance chamber and gazed apprehensively down the cave passage, entered via its southern wall. Yet neither ventured very far, feeling that they had seen enough on this occasion.

The Abode of el-Hanash

Ahmed, the tomb guardian, seemed happy that he had enabled our eventful investigation of the catacombs. Outside he answered questions, admitting to Saad that he had never entered the caves himself.

Why not?

“El-Hanash,” Ahmed announced, before providing an explanation. Saad translated, saying that the caves were thought to be the abode of a giant snake called el-Hanash. Apparently, it was “nine meters” (30 feet) long, and anyone attempting to enter el-kahf (Arabic for “the cave” or “caves”) would be squeezed to death within its powerful coils.

As to what type of snake it was, Ahmed replied, “el-cobra,” which, of course, is a species that features prominently in ancient Egyptian art and religion as the uraeus, a symbol of magical power and kingship. Yet, plainly, cobras never reach the size declared by Ahmed, meaning that the story of el-Hanash was obviously some kind of local fable. It was something I would attempt to explore further on my return home. (I later found that el-Hanash is also thought to be a horned viper, although it makes better sense that it is a giant python, in view of the story that it strangles to death anyone that attempts to remove what it protects—see chapter twenty.)

Through Saad, I now asked the guardian how far the caves went into the bedrock. His answer was unexpected, for he said that they went all the way to el-Faiyum.

The el-Faiyum Oasis is around fifty miles (80 km) south of Giza, which made his claim seem ludicrous. What it did suggest, however, was the existence of a tradition locally that the catacombs went for some considerable distance beneath the plateau, backing up Salt's assertion that he and Caviglia had penetrated the bedrock for at least "several hundred yards."

Were there any other entrances into the cave system? Ahmed said there were no other known entrances—just this one.

Finally, I asked him whether he was aware of anyone who had ever taken an interest in the tomb, with its enigmatic entrance into the caves. Ahmed informed us that since Vyse's day, just one Egyptologist had, to his knowledge, entered the tomb. This was an Egyptian who, during the 1980s, had excavated an area of the nearby Western Cemetery. However, Nigel later searched academic libraries in both Cairo and London without finding any confirmation that the Egyptologist in question, or anyone else, had ever inspected the tomb. Indeed, beyond the visits by Salt and Caviglia in 1817 and Vyse and Perring in 1837, Nigel has been unable to find any references mentioning the tomb, never mind its un-charted cave system.

Another Tomb

With our investigation of the Tomb of the Birds now complete, Ahmed seemed eager to show us another tomb, on the extreme northwest corner of the escarpment. It was situated about 175 yards (160 meters) farther west, directly beneath a huge, prefabricated building used to house workmen and engineers. The tomb was nothing to look at, being an even smaller version of the one explored on the east side of the Tomb of the Birds back in January 2007. Salt's plan of 1817 showed five tombs in the escarpment, but only three had been traced. For the moment, the only one we knew to possess an entrance into the caves was the Tomb of the Birds, which would appear to have been used also as a bird cemetery, most likely during Egypt's Late Period and Ptolemaic times.

Having said our farewells to the tomb guardian, we remained on the camels until reaching the busy road in front of the Great Pyramid. Here we dismounted and were soon lost among the hustle and bustle of the camel drivers, drink vendors, tourist groups, and backpackers enjoying a day out. Without further word, the three of us left the plateau and went back to the hotel, where, after a cleanup, we attempted to write down everything we could remember of the day. I also drew a rough plan of the caves and their relationship to the Tomb of the Birds, which would form the basis of a more detailed plan I intended to draw on our return to the United Kingdom. Afterward, I sent a brief e-mail to John Van Auken at the A.R.E. headquarters in Virginia Beach. It simply read:

Wonderful discoveries. We have penetrated into the cave system within the tomb of the birds and confirmed that this is the start of a cave system that stretched beneath the plateau. We have taken many pictures and footage. It is incredible stuff.

Through Nigel's extraordinary research and my determination to understand the

meaning of the Deneb spot in the Giza-Cygnus correlation, we had made a fantastic discovery, one of the most exciting in Giza for a long time. We had located Giza's lost underworld, a natural cave system that permeated the limestone bedrock of the Moqattam formation, having been formed by the actions of water across tens of thousands, or perhaps even hundreds of thousands, of years.

Somewhere within this vast labyrinthine complex were, according to Salt's memoirs, further large chambers that could preserve vital archaeological evidence going back to the age of Khufu and Khafre, some 4,500 years ago. It was even possible that this chthonic realm, the domain of the earth god Sokar, contained evidence of early human activity on the plateau corresponding to the mythical epoch known as Zep Tepi, the First Occasion, which would appear to have climaxed at the end of the last Ice Age, c. 11,000-10,000 BC. Indeed, there was every chance that the concept of the Shetayet—the duat n ba, or Underworld of the Soul, of the Edfu texts—was a direct echo of Giza's lost cave world. Was it possible that deep within its bowels somewhere was a simple womb chamber containing a power object seen as crystallizing the concept of first creation? Did it also contain the fabled Hall of Records, which Edgar Cayce predicted would become accessible from 1998 onward? Perhaps it was one of the "spacious" chambers that Salt and Caviglia had entered in 1817, and yet, because it contained nothing of intrinsic value, they had simply ignored its greater importance.

Reconsidering Vyse's Report

It was at this point that I re-examined Vyse's diary report of May 3, 1837, which now made better sense. He stated that the tomb's interior consisted of "two ruined chambers," which was probably an allusion to the side chamber and the area at the rear where the raised stone "bed" could be found. He went on to write, "A staircase descended from these apartments to a lower range of excavations and shafts, where fragments of mummies, and of embalmed animals were to be found beneath the sand." This was correct, as the hole in the wall of the tomb did indeed lead into "a lower range of excavations," which had to be a reference to the first cave chamber and the passages leading from it.

So it must have been beneath the rock debris and sand deposits that Vyse and Perring had found the bird and animal mummies, which apparently included "part of a large bird, which had been preserved with great care." His final statement, that "the footsteps of wild beasts, the sole tenants of these deserted sanctuaries, were everywhere to be seen," was also correct, since the cave passages contained, as Salt also recorded, a large number of animal bones, most obviously those of hyenas and whatever carrion they might have brought inside. The presence here of animal remains, even in Salt's day, makes it clear that the caves had long been open to the elements and had probably been so since antiquity. It seems inconceivable that the breached, mud-brick wall, no doubt erected to seal off the lower levels of the apparent bird cemetery, could have survived into modern times without tomb robbers pillaging its contents.

The only matter that could not be reconciled with Vyse and Perring's own description of the tomb was Perring's plan, both the published version in Vyse's book and the folio plan. Both versions show a sequence of what appear to be three or four east-west-orientated compartments adjoined to the west side of the tomb's north-south corridor. This meant that either Perring's plan was idealistic and did not reflect the tomb's actual layout, or, more enticingly, there was much more still to be found.

A Lost Raptor Cemetery in Giza?

Bird mummies have been found in tombs in Giza,¹ and even inside the Great Pyramid.² Yet the only Egyptological source consulted so far that alludes to a bird necropolis once existing on the plateau comes from *Divine Creatures: Animal Mummies in Ancient Egypt* (2005), a book edited by Dr. Salima Ikram, professor of Egyptology at the American University in Cairo. It twice alludes to the former presence in Giza of a “raptor” cemetery.³ Seeking to learn more about this subject, Nigel wrote to Dr. Ikram, who is currently director of the Animal Mummy Project at the Egyptian Museum. In her e-mail response, she referred us to her book *Divine Creatures*, adding that “only a few mummies were found and the precise location is unknown as it was an early 19th cen[tury] traveller’s account.”⁴

No more was offered on the matter by Dr. Ikram, leaving us unable to determine whether Giza’s lost raptor cemetery is in fact synonymous with the Tomb of the Birds and its accompanying cave system. If it is, then this realization would strengthen the likelihood that the site was the object of a local bird cult featuring raptor birds, most obviously ‘falcons or hawks of some kind. Such a cult would either have been focused around the god Horus, venerated on the plateau in his form as the Great Sphinx, or, more likely, Sokar, in his role as the guardian of Rostau and the Duat of Memphis. Hopefully, a clearer picture might emerge in due course.

Greco-Roman Catacombs

Why Henry Salt, in his own brief account of the catacombs, should have compared them with some seen in Alexandria remains unclear. A set of catacombs (a word that can mean either cave tunnels or a grotto used for burials) does exist to the east of Alexandria at a site called Kom el-Shouqafa. They form part of a subterranean cemetery used from the first century AD through the fourth century for private burials. In style, they bear similarities to the famous Christian catacombs of Rome, although those in Alexandria have a distinctive Greco-Egyptian appearance. The cemetery has three separate levels, which include various side chambers and a main burial chamber with wall recesses containing individual sarcophagi. Since the Kom el-Shouqafa catacombs were only discovered in 1900, after a donkey and cart fell into a previously unexplored pit, then Salt must have been alluding to others known to him in 1817. In a book by the Italian Orientalist Luigi Mayer (1755-1803) entitled *Views in Egypt, Palestine, and Other Parts of the Ottoman Empire* and published in 1801, there is an engraving of catacombs in Alexandria (see plate 18 of this present work). These are entered via an impressive portico and ornamented with a series of pillars in a manner completely unlike the caves explored beyond the Tomb of the Birds. This said, it seems that Henry Salt might well have had these examples in mind when he made the comparison with those found in Giza.

A Return Visit

Before leaving Egypt, I made the decision to go back to the caves. The film footage from our first visit was poor, to put it mildly, and we needed more photographic evidence. So a second trip was planned for Friday, March 7. On this occasion, Sue and I decided simply to enter the Western Cemetery on foot and just keep walking, in the hope of reaching the tomb unhindered. Nigel accompanied us as far as Lepsius-Giza #14, the mastaba marking the Deneb spot, after which Sue and I descended the escarpment and marched briskly toward our destination, a distance of about 306 yards (280 meters). I prayed that we would not be stopped, and sure enough, we were able to reach the now familiar rock-cut facade without hindrance.

Inside the tomb, we ventured through the breached, mud-brick wall into the cave system's first chamber. As we clambered down the fallen rock debris, Sue took a tumble in the darkness, gashing her knee and almost spraining her ankle. I asked her if she wanted to go back, but she was determined to carry on regardless of any pain.

Entering the north-south cave passage, the two of us attempted to navigate the huge, stone boulders that covered large parts of the floor, making progress slow and arduous, especially as the increased temperature inside the caves was almost unbearable, causing us to sweat uncontrollably. Animal bones seemed to be everywhere I shined the torch. Most of them were leg and thigh bones, although occasionally I caught a glimpse of animal skulls wedged between rocks. I noted also that the cave roof consistently reached a height of about fifteen feet (4.5 meters) above ground level.

On approaching the aforementioned fork in the cave passage, Sue and I saw that after about fifteen yards (14 meters), the extension to the left came to an abrupt

end. However, the one on the right continued in a southerly direction. Yet, strangely, the continuation of the passage, which had noticeably smooth walls, was now devoid of any fallen rock debris. In addition to this, the floor seemed to be covered with a thin carpet of guano dust, which felt spongy and quite comfortable to walk on.

The two of us reached a distance of about 125 yards (115 meters) from the opening chamber before coming to a halt. We saw in the darkness ahead another 10 or so yards (9 meters) of corridor, which did not seem about to finish. Almost certainly, this was the same cave tunnel that Salt and Caviglia had explored in 1817, and so I felt privileged to be following in their footsteps nearly two hundred years later.

So far, there had been no serious problems. The bats had been kind to us, flying around but generally keeping out of our way. Sue's leg was not too painful, and there had also been no sign of el-Hanash, the giant snake that apparently haunted the caves. I was, however, very much aware that the guano-filled air was steadily making breathing more and more difficult, which was behind my decision not to venture any farther on this occasion. As we started back, Sue did begin experiencing breathing difficulties. Knowing that this can lead to panic, I simply encouraged her to continue walking, asking her to count her paces on the way out, so that we might be able to gauge how far we had penetrated into the darkness. Counting seemed to help the situation, for Sue suffered no further breathing-related anxiety.

Somewhere in the cave passage, I noticed on the floor a long cigar-shaped artifact, about seven inches (18 cms) long and around one and a half inches (4 cms) in diameter. Wondering what this was, I picked it up. To my surprise, I saw it was a small mummy, arguably either a linen-wrapped bone or a small skeleton (see figure 63). I immediately placed it down so as not to contaminate any future archaeological work at the site.

As I exited the north-south cave passage in the pitch black, I forgot about the low ceiling just this side of the first chamber and smacked my head on an overhanging rock. This totally floored me for a few moments and caused a large bump to swell up. Luckily, I was wearing a hat, which absorbed most of the blow. Next time, I would have to be more careful.

Finally, we reached the small opening in the breached wall that led into the Tomb of the Birds, the journey having taken about forty-five minutes in all. We were both exhausted, and soaking wet with sweat, but mercifully we were in one piece. After recording on camera Sue's thoughts about the catacombs, we packed our things and got out of there, meeting up with Nigel in the vicinity of Lepsius-Giza #14. He had kept watch from the Western Cemetery, making sure that we were not disturbed.



63. Wrapped linen mummy or mummy fragment, found inside the Kahf el-Hanash cave system on our second visit in March 2008.

Our departure from the tomb went without incident, and it was now time to leave Egypt. Yet inside all three of us was an overwhelming sense that this was not over yet and that, at some time in the future, we would return to finish off what we had started here. When that would be, we did not care to think, but it would be soon. Very soon. We all knew that.

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Egyptian Aftermath

The return to a mundane reality was like an acute comedown from some unimaginable, archaeological drug of discovery. We each felt as if our very souls had been wrenched out and left behind in the dark depths of Giza's lost underworld, causing us to dream constantly of being back in the bat-infested caves. At the same time, we attempted to review the unbelievable photos and film footage taken inside the catacombs.

The strangest fact of all was how I had missed the opening into the cave system on our first visit to the Tomb of the Birds in January the previous year. I reexamined film footage from the journey and found that at one point, the eye of the camera actually pans across the hole in the breached, mud-brick wall. It even makes out a certain amount of detail beyond, and yet we still failed to spot the opening. This oversight has to be put down to poor lighting and the fact that we were not even looking for the entrance to any caves at this stage in our investigations. I had wanted to investigate the tomb purely because it had been used, apparently, as a bird cemetery and was close to the Deneb spot in the Giza-Cygnus ground-sky correlation. It brought to mind the statements in the readings of Edgar Cayce implying that the Hall of Records would be found only when the time was exactly right.

The Roots of el-Hanash

Over the next week or so, I made an accurate plan of the cave system and submitted an illustrated report to the A.R.E., who were quite obviously thrilled by the discoveries. Beyond this, I spent some time researching the mythical creature that Ahmed, the tomb guardian, had said haunted the caves. This was el-Hanash (from the Hebrew HaNaSh, meaning “snake”), which I quickly determined was a mythical snake that strikes those who attempt to steal whatever it guards. In fact, it was far more than simply a snake, for I discovered that in Arab-Egyptian legend, there is only one el-Hanash, which was seen as some kind of demon. Not that el-Hanash was evil, just extremely powerful, and of great size. The strangest fact of all was that I could find no reference anywhere to el-Hanash in connection with the Giza plateau or its labyrinthine world. I mentioned the name to a few researchers working in the field of Egyptian mysteries, and none of them had ever heard of el-Hanash.

The idea of a huge snake guarding a subterranean realm was reminiscent of the mythical snakes said to inhabit the duat underworld in ancient Egyptian funerary texts, such as the Am-duat. Indeed, Werner Forman and Stephen Quirke, in their book, *Hieroglyphs and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* (1996), describe the Duat as a nocturnal realm where the presence of “serpents imply an area deep in the earth, both rocky and dark.”¹ This certainly fitted the description of the caves we had just explored. So, were the Giza catacombs the original inspiration behind a physical representation of the duat underworld existing in Giza?

In the Fifth Hour of the Am-duat text, which we shall recall bore the name Rostau, that is, Giza, the falcon-headed deity Sokar is seen standing on a huge snake which has two heads at one end and a human head at the termination of its tail. The implication is that Sokar, a chthonic earth god who presided over the darkness of the tomb, has dominion over this serpentine creature. Was it possible that the Arab-Egyptian legend of el-Hanash haunting the plateau’s lost underworld was an echo of this primeval notion? Was it linked to the idea, found

in the Edfu texts, that the creative power behind the coming into being of the Primeval Ones was a great snake? Remember, the earth god Geb, as the soul of Sokar, was also associated with snakes in the Pyramid Texts, and in the New Kingdom, he was sometimes shown in funerary art as a snake-headed individual beneath his twin sister, Nuit, who arches over him as the sky. This serpentine association with the earth god came about because snakes were seen to hide within the darkness of caves and caverns.

That Nuit, ancient Egypt's principal sky goddess, was the personification in the heavens of the Milky Way, her womb and vulva marked by the stars of Cygnus, also supports this scenario, especially since the Deneb spot in the Giza-Cygnus correlation falls in the same general area as the entrance to the catacombs. Interestingly, even Nuit had a serpentine totem. In a New Kingdom funerary text entitled *The Book of the Cow of Heaven*, as part of a "Hymn to Nut," a magician is instructed to make a statue of the goddess with one of her hands holding a snake that stands erect before her.²

Gates of the Underworld

In the knowledge that the drinking water from the well Bir el-Samman does not originate from the Nile—something determined by John Shae Perring when in 1837 he compared its waterline with the ebb and flow of the nearby River Nile³—I suspect that there is every chance that it is indirectly linked with the caves of el-Hanash, since natural rock fissures in the limestone bedrock would follow the southeast orientation of the Moqattam formation. If so, then we now have two likely entrances to the cave system, at opposite ends of the plateau, and both on the same geological alignment.

In fact, there is a case for assuming that the caves of el-Hanash were themselves the origin behind the concept of the duat underworld in ancient Egypt's funerary religion, the reason why Giza came to be called Rostau, the “mouth of the passages,” the same name as the deepest part of the Duat in the Am-duat text. It is a conclusion strengthened in the knowledge that in the Twelfth Hour, or final hour, of the Am-duat, the deceased, as the sun god, passes through the body of a giant snake called Ankh-neteru (“Life of the gods”). Afterward, he leaves behind the darkness and is reborn on the eastern horizon within the sky goddess Nuit's body (here the word used for “body” is *ihty*, which can also mean “vulva” or “pubis”).⁴ The idea that the Ankh-neteru snake actually becomes the cave tunnel of the Duat, through which the deceased has to pass from tail to mouth, is perhaps based on an abstract belief that caves themselves were seen as the bodies of snakes.

Was this the origin behind the legend of el-Hanash haunting Giza's subterranean world? Was it the genius loci, or guardian spirit, of the caves themselves, a folklorish projection of the sheer existence of their dark, winding tunnels and passageways?

The Good Spirit

Even further evidence that the legend of el-Hanash is some distant echo of a long-forgotten creative power once believed to have existed within Giza's subterranean world comes from the star-worshipping Sabaeans. Medieval Arab writers recorded that these pagan peoples from the city of Harran, in what is today southeast Turkey, spoke of the Great Pyramid, or its neighbor the Second Pyramid, as marking the cave tomb of Agathodaimon, the "Good Spirit." This was a Greco-Egyptian demiurge, or progenitor, of the physical world, shown as a bearded snake with a halo of either seven or twelve rays. Agathodaimon was believed to be the "father" of Hermes (the Arabic Idris, Hebrew Enoch, and Egyptian Thoth), the legendary founder of both the Sabaeen race and the hermetic tradition, which, although of ancient Egyptian origin, flourished in Harran during the first millennium of the Christian era.

Agathodaimon's roots go back to the ancient Egyptian concept of the Ouroboros—a serpent, curled into a circle, that bites its own tail. It was the title also of a little-understood, Greco-Egyptian daimon (spirit), "heart-girt with a serpent," called Akephalos, meaning the "Headless One," or "the one without beginning or end."⁵

Medieval Arab tradition states that the Sabaeans believed that Agathodaimon "reposes," or rests, "under the pyramid" erected in his honor.⁶ Although quite clearly neither the Great Pyramid nor the Second Pyramid was built originally for this purpose, the Sabaeans remained adamant that these monuments concealed the tombs of Hermes and his father Agathodaimon, and came on pilgrimages to Giza right up until medieval times in order to venerate them. Is it possible, therefore, that the Sabaeen belief in the presence in Giza of Agathodaimon is a faint echo of the primeval earth snake, seen as the inspiration behind the creation of the physical world in the Edfu texts? Was this tradition based on preserved, albeit distorted, knowledge regarding the existence of some kind of chthonic earth snake in Giza that went on to be remembered as el-

Hanash? As we shall see in chapter twenty, this was not the last time that we would encounter el-Hanash in connection with the plateau's subterranean world.



64. and 65. Two images of the serpent Agathodaimon, the “good spirit,” said to repose, or rest, beneath the Giza plateau. The example on the right guarded the entrance to the Kom el-Shouqafa catacombs in Alexandria. Were the stories of Giza’s cave complex being the abode of el-Hanash an echo of Agathodaimon’s association with the plateau?

A Return to Egypt

The more everyone examined the dozens of still images taken inside the caves, the more it was felt that things were being seen that we had missed with our eyes. So much did this affect us that Sue and I decided that there was no other option but to go back. We needed a better record of the underground complex's layout and description. So, having explained the situation to the A.R.E., they agreed to help fund a further investigation of the Tomb of the Birds. Yet there were other considerations to be taken into account this time.

Since returning from Egypt, Nigel had found that microscopic fungal spores attached to bat guano can cause life-threatening illnesses such as histoplasmosis. This is known to induce blindness, respiratory problems, and even death in those with a poor immune system. Bats are also carriers of rabies, a lethal disease that, in Egypt, is found in about one in one hundred bats. Rabies can be passed on through bites, scratches, or aerosol transmission owing to the presence in the air of high concentrations of guano, as is the case with the caves in Giza.

On hearing this, I checked our own health status, especially as Sue and I had spent a considerable amount of time underground. Indeed, the volume of guano absorbed into our bodies through breathing alone had resulted in our urine gaining an overpowering stench of guano for at least twenty-four hours after returning from the caves on both occasions. However, we seemed to be okay. I did experience some eye problems and flulike symptoms following our return to the United Kingdom, although these disappeared after just a few days. Nigel, on the other hand, decided to have a full checkup with his doctor. Although seemingly suffering no obvious ill effects from the journey, Nigel did succumb to a severe eye condition shortly after our return, which could easily have been exacerbated by his limited time in the caves.

Putting safety high on the agenda for our return visit, we purchased suitable eye goggles, breathing masks, and air filters, hoping to help minimize our exposure to any unwanted diseases present in the caves.

Foul Air

Another potential health risk not considered on our initial visits to the catacombs was the threat of encountering pockets of carbon dioxide (CO₂), which is always a potential hazard, especially in limestone cave settings like those in Giza. High levels of the gas, coupled with a corresponding lowering of the oxygen level, can cause a loss of consciousness and even death. Cavers have to be constantly aware of the invisible presence of what they refer to as “foul air” or “bad air” by keeping a check on the levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Although expensive measuring instruments are recommended for this purpose, disposable lighters can be used to the same effect by noting the distance of the flame from the source of the gas jet. Very roughly, the farther away the flame becomes, the lower the level of oxygen and the higher the amount of carbon dioxide present. If there is no flame at all, it is time to get out of there, immediately. Having read up on this important subject, I made a note to pick up a couple of lighters from Nazlet el-Samman before venturing back into the caves.

Although it was touch and go whether Nigel would be able to accompany us, because of his persisting eye condition, he finally got the all-clear, and together we flew out to Egypt on Thursday, April 10. We arrived back in Cairo during the early hours of the 11th, intent on finishing off what we had begun just one month earlier.

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Trouble at the Tomb

Friday, April 11. Following just a few hours' sleep, we took camels and headed out for the Tomb of the Birds. This method of transport was preferred, since it guaranteed that we would reach our destination without undue hassle. Saad accompanied us once again as our guide and interpreter. He knew the terrain, the tourist police, and some of the plateau's antiquities officials, so he could speak on our behalf should any problems occur.

All went well until our arrival at the tomb. Immediately two officials arrived, angrily wanting to know on whose authority we were there. A third man then appeared over the top of the escarpment, his large frame silhouetted in the bright sunlight. Rather menacingly, I saw that he was wielding a thick cane that I at first took to be a baseball bat. His face told me that he was in no mood to tolerate this situation, and my heart raced, as I now realized that we were quite possibly in serious trouble. Saad interceded as best he could, although when the men used cell phones to summon other officials to join the furor, it looked as if it was game over.

For some fifteen minutes, we waited nervously, not knowing what to do or say. Whoever had been summoned were now on their way, and we were to stay put. Sensing that we needed outside help, I called a contact whose name had been given to me should any situation like this arise. The person at the other end of the line, a respected member of the local community, said he would drive up and see what the problem was, explaining that we should meet him on the road, away from the tomb. As we waited for the contact to arrive—still with the officials following our every move, along with Ahmed, the tomb guardian, who had

turned up to see what all the fuss was about—there was a sudden and quite baffling change of heart. Everything was now okay, and we could enter the tomb.

This made no sense to me whatsoever. I did not understand what was going on or what had been said by whom. It almost seemed as if we had stepped into an alternate reality—one more favorable to our seemingly impossible predicament. Even though I was still uncertain about what might happen next, I called my contact and told him that all was now well.

A New Compartment

Returning to the tomb, Nigel stayed with Ahmed and the officials as Sue and I promptly disappeared through the hole in the breached, mud-brick wall. Still affected by what was happening outside and realizing that we might only have a limited time in which to explore, we neglected to use the safety goggles and respiratory masks we had brought along for the occasion. Still believing that our problems were in no way over, Sue and I quickly navigated the north-south cave passage, using a walkie-talkie in an attempt to keep contact with Nigel. However, the signal was soon lost, leaving us without contact with the outside world.

After about twenty minutes of traversing through the darkness, we reached a point some thirty to forty yards (27 to 37 meters) beyond where we had gotten on our previous visit. Here the cave passage ends abruptly in a sheer rock face some fifteen feet (4.5 meters) in height. Just before this point, an opening on the left leads into a parallel compartment that extends for about thirty feet (10 meters) toward the south and about fifteen feet (4.5 meters) toward the north. At its southern end the room shrinks down rapidly into a narrow tube at ground level, which is approximately twenty-six to thirty inches (66 to 76 cms) in diameter. This carries on toward the south for a distance of perhaps nine feet (2.75 meters) before opening out again into a separate chamber that offers the possibility that the cave system continues in this direction, that is, roughly in the direction of the Second Pyramid.

Pleased that we had penetrated deeper into the cave system than on our previous visit, we now decided against venturing farther. I was still worried about what was going on outside and imagined that, at any time, our exploration could be curtailed. It was not a good state of mind to be in, so I felt it best that neither of us go through the stone tube on this occasion. Moving back into the main cave passage, we began our return journey. Close to where the cave tunnel splits, Sue shined the torch into a small alcove and noticed something in a small recess. It

was a large, white spider with long legs and a bulbous body reminiscent of a pearl. She mentioned it briefly but spoke no more of the matter until later that day.

Finally, we were able to reach Nigel using the walkie-talkie. He told us that in our absence two more officials—one an antiquities policeman and the other a plainclothes policeman—had turned up, further complicating the situation. Yet so strongly had Nigel conveyed to them the dangers of going down into the caves, unprepared, they had all decided against exploring further.

Eventually, we reached the surface and moved into the bright sunlight. There were now five other people present besides Saad, Nigel, Sue, and me. Bizarrely they all seemed in good spirits, laughing and joking about one another's photographs on their respective identity cards. Clearly, all this was too much for us to take in, considering our own adventures in the caves, so we simply took time to rest and prepare ourselves for the journey back to civilization. Having said our goodbyes, we rejoined Saad and the camels. Very soon we were on our way back to the Great Pyramid.

White Widow Spider

Back at the hotel that evening, the three of us got together to discuss the day's somewhat disturbing sequence of events. Owing to the intense pressure we had been under on arrival at the tomb, I failed to get the necessary pictures, video footage, and measurements I might have liked. Although I had no wish to go back to the tomb, I now felt there was no other option. So the decision was made—we would return one final time. Yet, before doing so, I looked online in an attempt to identify the spider seen by Sue in the caves. The closest match was the white widow, a species that lives in rocky environments and is indigenous to Egypt. Its bite can be fatal to infants and the infirm, and clearly, anyone else suffering this fate would require immediate medical attention.

In the knowledge that being bitten by a white widow spider was not an option, on our return to the caves, we would have to make sure that any exposed skin was protected as best as possible. This, of course, was on top of the very real risk of contracting histoplasmosis, and even rabies, from airborne particles of guano, as well as the ever present threat of encountering foul air in the deepest part of the caves. High concentrations of carbon dioxide, along with a corresponding decrease in oxygen levels, could easily have fatal consequences. None of this had, I am sure, been taken into account when Edgar Cayce initiated the search for the Egyptian Hall of Records back in 1925!

A Fourth Visit

Nigel, Sue, and I, once more on camels in the company of Saad, made a stressful return to the Tomb of the Birds on Sunday, April 13, hoping that we could avoid the problems experienced on our earlier visit. Aware that our presence had already been noted by at least two officials at different checkpoints, one of whom had shouted across to us, we expected company very soon. Despite this, Sue and I entered the cave system, leaving Nigel inside the tomb. This time, we attempted to wear safety goggles and respiratory masks to minimize our exposure to airborne guano.

As we passed through the first chamber (which we now spoke of as “the Dome”) into the north-south cave passage, Nigel’s voice came across the walkie-talkie informing us that two officials were on their way across to the tomb. Not quite knowing what to do, Sue and I made the decision to press on, moving rapidly through the cave tunnel in the pitch darkness. Eventually, we reached the compartment marking the farthest point explored so far. We saw before us the narrow tube, which Sue got down and examined at ground level. It is almost circular, with smooth walls just about wide enough for a person to squeeze through on his or her stomach.

As Sue flashed off a photograph, she distinctly heard the sound of something moving about in the darkness, slowly displacing floor debris in the cavity beyond and to the left of the tube. It seemed that the camera flash had disturbed a fair-sized animal or creature that inhabited the darkness of the caves. As to what this might have been, we had no idea, although it did not help our predicament. Under severe pressure from what was going on outside and unsettled by the unexpected encounter with a living creature existing in the claustrophobic space beyond the cave tube, I advised Sue against venturing farther.

Parallel Chiseling

Obviously, we looked for evidence of human activity in the caves and were finally rewarded when we came across sporadic parallel chiseling, which had been carved diagonally into nondescript areas of the wall on the east side of the compartment containing the narrow tube. It was present also, I noted, on the east wall just short of its entrance. Who might have been responsible for this handiwork and what purpose it had served was unclear, especially as it appeared to be quite random in its placement. Parallel chiseling is found also in the cave system's first chamber as well as in the tomb itself. In these cases, however, the chiseling is clearly to cut back and chamfer the walls, something that would have been unnecessary deeper into the caves. It is possible that the chiseling is decorative or even abstract art from some bygone age, although no more can be said at this time without further exploration.

A False Sense of Well-being

Despite everything that had happened, the feeling in the farthest compartment reached was one of calmness and tranquillity. It is fair to say that it exuded an ambience unlike anywhere else in the cave system, which made us happy to remain there for a while longer. In fact, in the knowledge that anything could be going on outside, I did not want to leave there at all, even though eventually we did. It was an abnormal sensation, under the circumstances, especially as there was apparently an animal of some kind moving about beyond the stone tube—something that should have caused us more concern than it actually did.

I cannot properly explain why I felt the way I did in this compartment, other than to consider the possibility that any assumed changes in oxygen levels, after I gave up using the lighter to check for foul air, might have been causing a false sense of well-being. This, I afterward read, is a classic symptom of hypoxia—a lack of oxygen to the brain. Sue felt exactly the same way. If all of this is correct, then it was important that we left when we did, otherwise we might have passed out, or worse, in just a few minutes. The most dangerous fact about hypoxia is that if a person becomes inflicted by it, then he or she will have no noticeable symptoms until it is virtually too late.

On a brighter note, I took a number of high-quality pictures of the compartment containing the narrow tube, which has various natural recesses and alcoves. The entire room is very spacious with its floor devoid of rock debris. The cave walls at this depth are predominantly orange-red in color, suggesting the presence of iron oxide, which in some places seemed to be oozing from the walls as a fine powder. I estimated that the tube lies approximately 120-150 yards' (110-140 meters) walking distance from the cave system's entrance chamber.

Stone Tube

We suspect that the stone tube at the southern end of the compartment leads into a still deeper area of the cave system, in accordance with the description of the catacombs offered by Henry Salt in his memoirs. He speaks of passing through “rude and craggy vaults, several hundred yards into the rock, creeping at times on our hands and knees.” This is certainly the only place so far discovered where it would be necessary to go down on your hands and knees in order to crawl through a hole, even though to fully pass through the tube, you would need to go through on your belly.

Despite these surmises, a stereo image of the cave tube (created by Rodney Hale on our return to the United Kingdom) clearly shows that a hollow cavity exists just beyond its exit on the other side, although whether this is the start of a new cave tunnel remains unclear. Sue definitely heard the sound of something—a creature or animal of some kind—beyond and to the left of the hole, suggesting that there is a turn of direction toward the east, and the direction of the Second Pyramid. Whether this proves to be the case must remain unanswered until such time as we can better explore the caves.

Having seen and experienced enough, Sue and I made our return along the cave passage, reaching the surface breathless and our clothes soaking wet with sweat, after some fifty minutes in the darkness. We exited the plateau without any further problems, the officials having abandoned their journey to the tomb. Despite the extreme pressure under which Nigel, Sue, and I undertook our exploration of the Tomb of the Birds on these final two occasions, this second expedition had been an outright success. We had obtained incredible insights into the extent of the cave system, enabling me to create a much better plan this time. We were also able to take some extraordinary still pictures, which will help the world to better comprehend what awaits discovery below the plateau of Giza.

Finding a natural cave system may not compare with the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, but for us, it was one of the most incredible experiences of our lives. Something that we had only read about in the past had been found using sound, and very logical, historical research. It was a great feeling and something that we will never forget or regret, as stressful as it might have seemed, for we now have firm evidence that Giza's lost underworld is no longer lost.

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The Prophecy of el-Hanash

Monday, April 14. Wishing to spend our final day in Egypt free from hassle and aggravation, Nigel, Sue, and I visited Nazlet el-Samman. From a side road off the busy main square, we entered a small handicraft shop run by a local sculptor and artist named Omar (a pseudonym; full name on file) and his brothers and sisters, whom Nigel had known for about ten years.

Inside the shop, Sue and I were drawn immediately to a number of stone statues of raised cobras carved by Omar, who, the assistant (one of his brothers) informed us, was on his way back to the shop. Interested to know what these represented, I asked Omar's brother whether they were el-Hanash or el-Thuban, the more common name for a snake. At that moment Omar appeared in the doorway, and a conversation ensued about his statues, which he confirmed were indeed el-Hanash. Without prompting, the sculptor went on to relate an extraordinary prophecy concerning the future discovery of what he spoke of as the "Hall of Records."

Omar said that once every year a concealed opening grants access to a tunnel that leads beneath the Sphinx to the Hall of Records, which is guarded by a giant snake called el-Hanash. He holds in his mouth a great "diamond" that gleams with the colors of the rainbow. It is this that the creature uses in the darkness to light the way. Anyone gaining entry to this cave passage and coming face to face with el-Hanash will be instantly blinded by a poison that he spits from his mouth (presumably having first put down the crystal).

Yet one day, when the end of days is near, someone who gains entry into the cave tunnel and confronts el-Hanash will be blinded just in one eye. It will be this person who will go on to access the Hall of Records, which lies beyond a sequence of gates that must be navigated to reach this hidden chamber. Once inside, the chosen one will attain special powers. He or she will become very strong, like unto a god, and will have the ability to “make rivers flow” or “go dry.” Yet if there is an attempt to remove the diamond—the source of this great power—then this person will perish.

Access via Bir el-Samman

Access to the tunnel leading to the Hall of Records, Omar said, was via the well Bir el-Samman in the cemetery, a site which Ali el-Samman had confirmed to us was said to conceal a cave tunnel leading to Giza's subterranean world. This was only the second time that I had ever heard anyone speak of the well in this manner.

Omar now went further by claiming that he himself had been lowered down Bir el-Samman on a rope, when the water level was particularly low. He had seen two tunnels leading horizontally away from the shaft—one running east and the other west, the former being slightly higher than the latter. According to him, both shafts were square in shape and about “one meter” in height and width. He is certain that the tunnels are artificial and that others, possibly heading north and south, exist at an even greater depth. Clearly, I cannot verify his claims, although it is hoped that at some time a suitable remote operated camera can be lowered down the well in order to see what is really there.

There seems little question that Omar, a man in his late twenties or early thirties, wholeheartedly believes this colorful prophecy, the origin of which was not made clear. Yet his use of the term “Hall of Records” has obviously been grafted onto any indigenous elements of the story. It would thus be easy to conclude that he is simply manipulating tales told to him by Westerners concerning the predicted finding of the Egyptian Hall of Records, located somewhere in the vicinity of the Sphinx monument. However, it was the mention of el-Hanash that caught my attention, for it was only the second time that I had heard anyone use this name—the other being Ahmed, the tomb guardian encountered at the Tomb of the Birds, who I was pretty sure had not been influenced by Western, New Age ideas, especially since he did not speak a word of English.

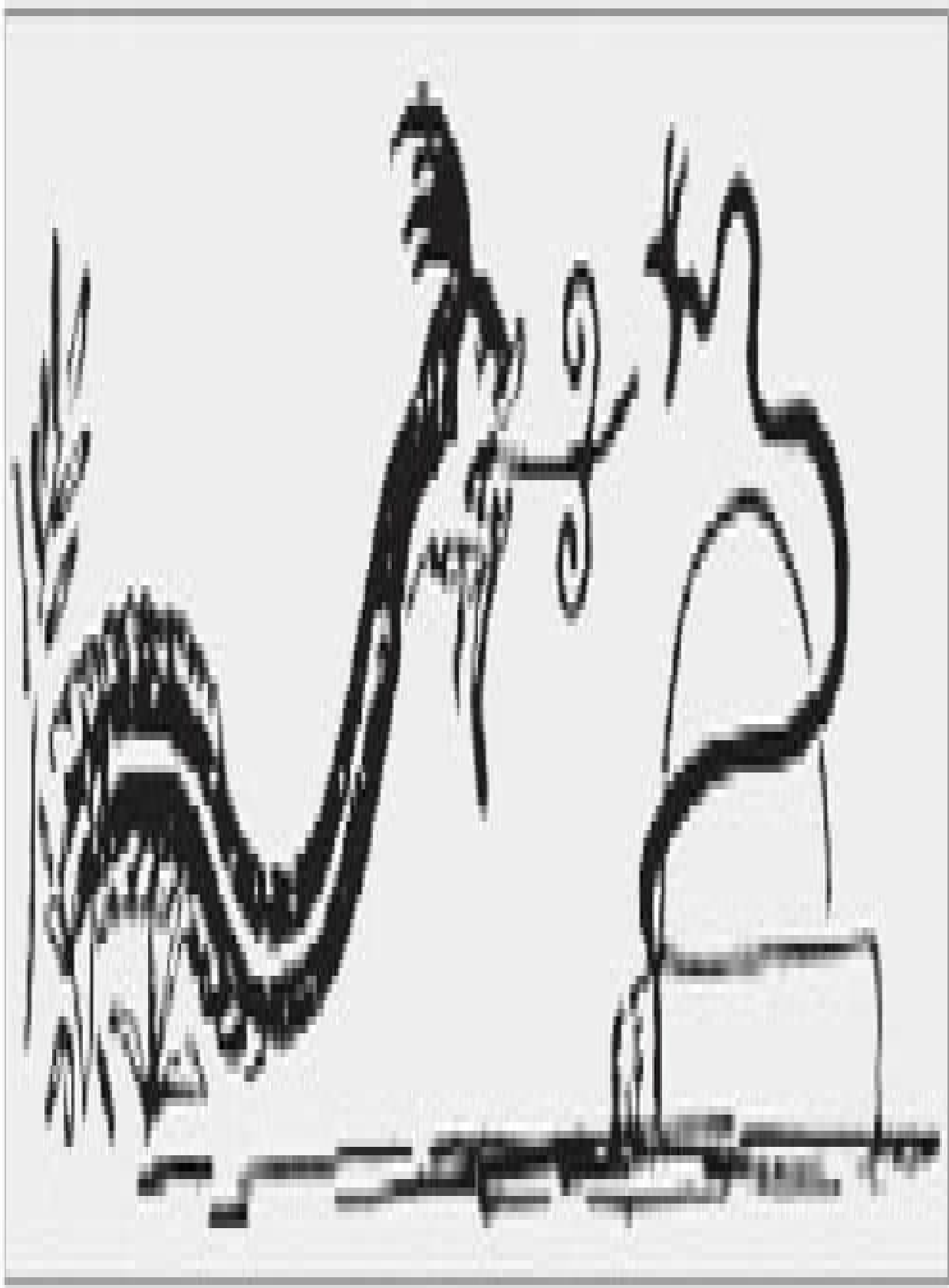
Kernels of Truth

So, did Omar's story contain any real truths regarding what might await discovery beneath the plateau of Giza? Curiously, there are elements of the prophecy that echo statements found in the Edfu building texts concerning the establishment of the island of creation and the existence of the Underworld of the Soul. For instance, the large "diamond" carried in the mouth of el-Hanash seemed reminiscent of the Bnnt embryo, which can be compared with the lingams of Hindu tradition, some of which are fashioned from crystal. These conical-shaped objects, which vary in size, are often found in womb chambers located in the deepest part of a temple, from which they are thought to effect creation in the outside world. The "diamond" in the el-Hanash story is said to possess similar qualities, being able to "make rivers flow" or "go dry," magical acts that were accredited to the mythical beings known as the Shebtiw, Wa and 'Aa, who were twice able to make the encroaching waters recede from the island of creation.

One facet of the el-Hanash story that seems independent of New Age influence is the reference to those encountering the snake going blind from its venomous spittle. Species of cobras and vipers both have the ability to spit venom when threatened, providing a basis for this belief concerning el-Hanash. Yet just maybe the onset of blindness in the story derives from another source altogether. As already mentioned, histoplasmosis, a disease spread by airborne guano, can cause blindness and even death. Thus the Arab-Egyptian story of el-Hanash may well reflect the adverse effects of long-term exposure to guano in a cave environment.

What I do find interesting is that, in the prophecy offered by Omar, we have elements of a story that may well have derived from a mixture of sources; including local folk beliefs (el-Hanash, the blindness caused from a snake's venomous spittle, and the significance of the well); the Edfu records (the diamond as the Bnnt embryo and entering the Underworld of the Soul to make

the waters recede); funerary texts, such as the Book of Gates (the gates to be navigated); and even New Age philosophies (prophesied end times and the search for Cayce's Hall of Records, with its entrance somewhere in the vicinity of the Sphinx). How much each element may have affected the other is now impossible to say. However, there was enough here to convince me that, in the story of the "diamond," we have slim evidence of the existence in the "Hall of Records"—that is, Giza's underworld realm—of a crystal-like lingam, or baetyl, symbolizing the Bnnt embryo (the source of creation) of the Edfu texts and, very likely, the Benben stone of Heliopolitan tradition.



66. Detail of a mural from Pompeii, Italy, showing an omphalos, perhaps that of Delphi, guarded by a snake who fights off a python. All omphali, like the lingams of Hindu tradition, were thought to have been guarded by snakes. Does el-Hanash guard a stone or crystal representation of the Benben stone or Bnnt embryo inside Giza's womb chamber of creation?

The Changing Face of the Hall of Records

We may have rediscovered the entrances to Giza's lost underworld, but locating the Hall of Records is something that still eludes us. However, I am confident that Edgar Cayce was tapping into an unconscious stratum of knowledge appertaining to the existence of a deep underground place that has existed in Giza since at least the end of the last Ice Age, c. 11,000-10,000 BC, and which, when found, will have profound implications for our understanding of the past.

Such ideas are, I feel, intuitively gained and partly representative of what really does await discovery. They somehow manage to manifest into physical reality through artistic or psychic expression, as was the case with Edgar Cayce, who, as we may recall, claimed as a youth to be able to absorb the contents of a book simply by sleeping with it under his pillow. Similar motivations might also have been behind the writing of Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*, which, although influenced by the composer's deep associations with Freemasonry, went beyond anything seen before relating to the Egyptian mysteries. Today dreams and visions continue to inspire the search for the Hall of Records. Indeed, I would be deceiving the reader if I did not admit that my own quest of discovery began as far back as 1985, after listening to a friend recount a dream in which he had found himself entering a subterranean chamber with green, stone walls, located in the vicinity of the Great Sphinx.

Akashic Records

Today we might be tempted to imagine the Hall of Records as a womb chamber of first creation, housing the original Bnnt embryo, or Benben stone, and I think this is taking us closer to the truth of what was certainly thought to exist inside the Underworld of the Soul, or Shetayet, in which Osiris apparently achieved transformation into an ascended being at one with the stars of Cygnus, the starry womb of the Cosmic Mother. For the ancient Egyptians, this underground structure signified the center of the universe and the beginning of all creation, from which everything else sprang and to which the souls of all living things would ultimately return in death. The minds of all those who had ever incarnated, both in the past and present, were connected back to this point of common origin, like the spokes of an imaginary wheel joined to a central hub of creation.

So joining with the Bnnt embryo at the womblike heart of the Underworld of the Soul enabled not only a total understanding of everything in the universe but also every other conceived level of existence—all knowledge thus being eternal and available to mental sympathy. Therefore, to journey back to the source of creation was like becoming one with all knowledge, which itself constituted what Madame Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, identified in the nineteenth century as the Akasha, the universal or divine mind, the storehouse of the akashic records.

Using Blavatsky's popular term the "akashic records," Edgar Cayce came to express the divine source of the life records of his sitters, gained, as we saw in chapter two, while in a sleep state via an ethereal construct that he described as a form of astral "hall of records." Cayce thought of this realm as an externalization of the Book of Life referred to in the book of Revelation, and it is possible that America's "Sleeping Prophet" saw the existence of the ethereal hall of records as inspiring the construction of a physical counterpart in Egypt (along with two others elsewhere in the world). Such sites are considered to house the life

records of all those who have experienced previous lives on earth, although we can more easily understand now how Cayce's Hall of Records can also reflect the prehistoric concept of a subterranean womb chamber of First Creation, synonymous with the knowledge of life itself.

Ancient Origins

Yet questions still remain concerning the exact nature of the Underworld of the Soul and who exactly was responsible for its construction. Was it the faceless individuals, the mythical beings, described in such an extraordinary manner in the Edfu building texts? We know little about them, other than that their world would appear to have been rocked by a global cataclysm, most likely brought about by a comet impact c. 11,000 BC, which devastated large parts of the world, killing an estimated 75 percent of the population in North America alone. What we do know about these forerunners of the dynastic Egyptians is that they recognized a great snake, which later took the form of a bird, as the progenitor of earthly creation.

Our earliest ancestors are now known to have venerated the snake as a primordial symbol of life's origins. This was brought home in 2006 by the discovery of a ritual cave in Botswana's Tsodilo Hills, which is thought to have been a continuous site of worship for the indigenous San bushmen for up to 70,000 years. Throughout this time, they have entered this sacred domain, away from the outside world, to venerate a divine snake, its earthly manifestation symbolized in the form of a rock simulacrum that bears a distinct likeness to a snake's head.¹

In San mythology, humankind is said to be descended from a python, a symbolic externalization perhaps of the serpentlike characteristics of human DNA and any effect on its evolution by external sources.² It is plausible that such sites of ancient sanctity were the precursors of the primeval mound, or island of creation, containing the Underworld of the Soul of the Edfu records. This, to me, is the most likely way forward in trying to understand what awaits discovery in the dark depths of Giza's labyrinthine world.

Yet I acknowledge also that such ideas stem only from our current understanding of archaeology and our somewhat selective interpretation of ancient Egyptian creation texts and funerary literature. In the future, we might see the Hall of Records as a powerhouse of cosmic energy, channeled from a point beyond the normal confines of space-time, thus enabling access to other worlds and other levels of existence.

For now, though, in our own time, we can celebrate in the knowledge that Giza does indeed have a cave underworld, and there is every possibility that it may have influenced the development of ancient Egypt's earliest understanding of cosmic creation and the rebirth of the soul in the hereafter. The Hall of Records' greater secrets remain inviolate, protected, in Arab-Egyptian belief at least, by the snake el-Hanash, and he is unlikely to release them until the time is absolutely right. When finally this happens, we shall learn the greater truths, not just about the origins of ancient Egyptian civilization, but where they themselves acquired their wisdom and knowledge, which came from an age that is only now being pieced together for the very first time.

Postscript

Readers will want to learn what the Egyptian authorities have had to say about our rediscovery of Giza's lost underworld, especially in the knowledge that no reference to either the Tomb of the Birds or the accompanying caves of el-Hanash have been found in any academic publication. In October 2008 John Van Auken, a director of the A.R.E. and a research support member of the American Research Center in Egypt, met with Dr. Zahi Hawass, the secretary general of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), in Cairo. The two men are on good terms, having been acquainted for the past fifteen years. The A.R.E. director introduced the high-profile Egyptologist to our discoveries, explaining how they were made and showing him several photographs, both of the Tomb of the Birds and the setting inside the cave complex. According to Van Auken, Dr. Hawass admitted that he "did not think these caves had been investigated by anyone he knows."¹ He thanked Van Auken for sharing this information with him, and said, "I'll look into it."²

Clearly, Dr. Hawass had been impressed by what he had heard and seen, and on our next opportunity to visit Egypt, Sue and I met with him at the offices of the SCA in Zamalek, Cairo. During the brief and somewhat tense meeting, which took place on Friday, April 9, 2009, I presented him with the facts regarding Henry Salt and Giovanni Caviglia's little-known investigation of the Giza catacombs in 1817 and our subsequent rediscovery of the caves in March 2008. From the outset, it was apparent that his attitude toward the subject had shifted somewhat since his meeting with John Van Auken six months earlier.

With respect to the Tomb of the Birds, he told us: "This tomb is known—it is a rock-cut tomb, which has been cut down into the rock. I know this place. It has been cleaned, fully explored, and recorded."

I asked him where we might find this information. Was it published, since we had been unable to find any modern reference to this tomb?

“I will send you this information by e-mail,” he said.

I pointed out that beyond the tomb was a natural cave system, perhaps tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of years old. It extends for at least “several hundred yards” and might hold important clues regarding early human activity on the plateau.

There was a silent, dismissive shrug before he said: “There is nothing here to discover. It is all known.”

I emphasized that he was underestimating how important the outside world would see the discovery of these caves, which, to the best of our knowledge, have yet to be fully explored. I asked him to place a gate on either the entrance to the tomb or the caves themselves. I explained also that they were very dangerous and that people might easily get hurt if left to their own devices down there. What is more, the caves contain a delicate ecosystem, as well as untouched archaeology, that would be destroyed if not adequately protected.

“Then I will close the tomb.”

Shortly afterward, the meeting ended. Dr. Hawass said he would contact me. I waited for three weeks but did not hear from him. I wrote to Dr. Hawass twice, asking him to send the report he promised on the clearance of the Tomb of the Birds. I have still not received a reply at the time of this writing.

Despite this setback, it is sincerely hoped that the SCA, on behalf of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, will recognize the Tomb of the Birds, with its cave underworld, as a site of special scientific interest, in order to preserve its valuable contents for future generations.

Abbreviations

CC	Culture and Cosmos
CE	Chronique d’Egypte
CUP	Cambridge University Press
GM	Göttinger Miszellen
JACF	Journal of the Ancient Chronology Forum
JEA	Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JHA	Journal for the History of Astronomy
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
MD	Migration and Diffusion
MIO	Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung (Berlin)
nd	no date of publication, circa only given
NJG	NRIAG Journal of Geophysics
OUP	Oxford University Press, Oxford
PPP	Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology
PT	Pyramid Text
SAK	Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur; SI = Studia Islamica
TdE:	Trabajos de Egiptología Papers on Ancient Egypt (Madrid)
ZAS	Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde.

Notes

Note: Throughout manuscript, bracketed comments within quotations are those of the author. Comments enclosed in parentheses within quotations are original to source quoted.

Chapter One—The Sleeping Prophet

1. Carter, *My Years with Edgar Cayce*, p. 24.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Cayce reading 5748-6. All Edgar Cayce readings are from *The Complete Edgar Cayce Readings on CD-ROM*.
4. All Egyptian dates are taken from Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, “The Kings of Egypt from Manetho, the King-lists, and the Monuments,” pp. 429-53.

Chapter Two—The Mystery of Mysteries

1. Massey, *Egypt the Light of the World*, Vol. 1, p. 339.

2. Cayce reading 195-14.

3. Caption reads: "Diagrammatic view of the discoveries recently made of hidden temples within the Sphinx," Times of India, American Sunday edition, 1913.

4. The claims are made by Robert Temple, writing with his wife Olivia, in *The Sphinx Mystery* (see also "Notes" section, chap. 16, n. 2). They are countered in my extensive review "The Sphinx Mystery by Robert Temple with Olivia Temple" in *Earthquest News*, 12:1 (May 2009), pp. 5-12, available to view online,
<http://www.andrewcollins.com/page/news/News_vii_EQ12%20_1_May2009.ht

5. See Temple, *The Sphinx Mystery*, pp. 97, 103.

6. Notation by Gladys Davis Turner attached to reading 752-L-1, 11/28/34. "Edgar Cayce Experiences re going to Hall of Records." Source: Vault Black Book, *Psychic Religious Experiences*, A.R.E., Virginia Beach.

7. Notation by Gladys Davis Turner attached to reading 1256, 8/26/36. Source: Vault Black Book, *Psychic Religious Experiences*, A.R.E., Virginia Beach.

8. Notation by "img" following reading 1523-L-1, 4/12/38. Source: Vault Black Book, *Psychic Religious Experiences*, A.R.E., Virginia Beach, VA.

9. Cayce reading 378-16.

10. Cayce reading 5748-6.

11. Cayce reading 2329-3.

12. Cayce reading 378-16; 378-14.

13. For Dr. Zahi Hawass's account of his excavation of the Osiris Shaft see "The Mysterious Osiris Shaft of Giza" at <<http://www.drhawass.com/blog/mysterious-osiris-shaft-giza/>>. For an alternative account of the rediscovery see Skinner-Simpson.

14. Hawass, "Discovery of the Osiris Shaft," pp. 401-22.

Chapter Three—Beneath the Bedrock

1. Cayce reading 378-14.

2. Lehner, *The Egyptian Legacy*.

3. Cayce, Schwartzer, and Richards, *Mysteries of Atlantis Revisited*, pp. 133-35.

4. Dolphin et al., Applications of Modern Sensing.
5. Charles Thomas Cayce, e-mail communication via Doris Van Auken.
6. Abbas et al., "Uncovering The Pyramids," pp. 1-16.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. See, for example, "Egypt: Capstone," Fifth Dimensional Shift, <<http://www.4dshift.com/full.htm>>.
10. See Coppens, "New Pyramid Age," Philip Coppens's Web site, <http://www.philipcoppens.com/nap_art11.html>. Also Coppens, The New Pyramid Age.
11. Vyse, Operations, Vol. 2, p. 323 n. 9.
12. Ibid., p. 324 n. 3.

13. Usted Ibrahim, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 325 n. 5.

14. Marcellinus, *Roman History*, xxii, 15, 30.

Chapter Four—From the Underworld

1. Hart, *Dictionary*, s.v. “Sokar,” pp. 202-3.

2. Budge, *From Fetish to God*, p. 360.

3. S. Hassan, *Excavations at Giza, Season 1934-35*, p. 265.

4. *Ibid.* This same conclusion had been drawn many years earlier by the celebrated Swiss Egyptologist Gustave Jéquier (1868-1946). Budge, in *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt*, 1934, p. 361, remarks: “JÉQUIER has pointed out rightly that originally the scenes of the Fourth and Fifth Hours formed a complete Book of the TUAT [i.e., Duat], and that the final scene in it was the sunrise.” (Brackets mine.)

5. For a full account of the Fourth and Fifth Hours of the Am-duat, see Budge, *Egyptian Heaven and Hell*, Vol. 1, pp. 62-115.

6. See, for instance, Serrano, *Royal Festivals*, p. 92; Budge, *Fetish*, pp. 18-22; Lurker, *Gods and Symbols*, s.v. “Sokar,” p. 113.

7. Budge, *Fetish*, pp. 360, 361 n. 1.
8. For example, see Bauval and Hancock, *Keeper of Genesis*, pp. 146-47.
9. For a review of the Am-duat text and its relationship to the various cult centers along the Nile, see Budge, *Fetish*, pp. 357-68.
10. Stecchini, "Notes," pp. 297-98.
11. Wainwright, "Amun's Meteorite," pp. 41-44.
12. Gimbutas, *The Living Goddesses*, pp. 69-70, figs. 52 & 53.
13. Hart, s.v. "Sokar," pp. 202-3.
14. Budge, *Egyptian Heaven*, Vol. 1, p. 93.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Lehner, *The Complete Pyramids*, p. 30.

17. S. Hassan, Season 1934-35, p. 265.

18. See, for example, Bauval and Hancock, *Keeper of Genesis*, p. 147, and fig. 38, who, after Hassan, draw this same conclusion and compare the perspective of the Great Pyramid and Sphinx monument as seen from the southeast with the imagery of the middle and lowest registers of the Fifth Hour of the Am-duat text.

Chapter Five—God’s Tomb

1. Gaballa and Kitchen, “The Festival of Sokar,” pp. 16, 63.

2. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, Vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Dynasty*, pp. 321-24. See also Edwards, “The Shetayet of Rosetau,” pp. 27-36.

3. “La tombe du dieu,” see Pasquali, “Les Fouilles De S. Hassan,” GM 216, pp. 75-78.

4. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. 1, “The Memphite Theology,” II, pp. 17-22. It is recognized that other gods, such as Thoth and Atum, are also linked with the Shetayet, although I believe that these are simply borrowings from the cult of Sokar-Osiris.

5. S. Hassan, Season 1934-35, p. 265.

6. Ibid.

7. See, for instance, Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. 3, “The Stela of Taimhotep,” pp. 59-65.

8. Lurker, *Gods and Symbols*, s.v. “Primeval hill,” p. 96.

9. Reymond, *Mythical Origin*, p. 117.

Chapter Six—The Hunt for the Shetayet Shrine

1. See Gaballa and Kitchen, pp. 40-46, 69, and Edwards, pp. 32-34.

2. Edwards, p. 34.

3. Ibid.

4. See Edwards, pp. 27-28, and Pasquali, GM 216, pp. 75-78.

5. Ibid., and see also Pasquali, “Des fouilles « discrètes »,” GM 215, pp. 7-8.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Edwards, p. 35.

10. Ibid.

11. Pasquali, GM 215, and Pasquali, GM 216. See also Breasted, *Ancient Records, Vol. 1, The First to the Seventeenth Dynasties*, pp. 83-87, for the text of Inventory Stela.

12. Edwards, pp. 34-35.

13. S. Hassan, *Season 1934-35*, p. 263.

14. Coffin Text, Spell 241.

15. Coffin Text, Spell 314.

16. Coffin Text, Spell 1080.

17. Coffin Text, Spell 1087.

18. Budge, Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary, Vol. 2, s.v. “benn,” p. 217a.

19. Forman and Quirke, Hieroglyphs, p. 60.

20. Bauval and Gilbert, The Orion Mystery, pp. 200-203.

21. See Wainwright, pp. 41-44. See also Bauval and Gilbert, pp. 203-4, after the work of E. A. Wallis Budge and J.-P. Lauer.

22. Edwards, p. 34, after Gaballa and Kitchen.

23. Lurker, s.v. “Sokar,” p. 113.

24. PT [Pyramid Text] 685, 2069. All utterances from Faulkner, Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts.

25. Lehner, Pyramids, p. 30.

26. Gimbutas, *The Living Goddesses*, p. 60.

Chapter Seven—Homeland of the Primeval Ones

1. Reymond, pp. 8-10.

2. I have used the popular spelling of *zep tepi*, whereas Reymond employs *sp tpy*.

3. Reymond, pp. 67, 76; *Primeval Ones*, *p3wtyw tpyw*; *Most Ancient Ones*, *wrw n wrw*; pp. 60-61, *snake, chc*.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 60; *Earth-Maker*, *ir-t3*.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 56, 57; *earth*, *t3*.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

8. Ibid., p. 79.

9. Ibid., pp. 63, 65.

10. Ibid., pp. 12, 55, 65; island, iw.

11. Ibid., pp. 65-66; Province of the Beginning, spt h3t.

12. Ibid., p. 62; egg, swht.

13. Ibid., pp. 64-65.

14. Ibid., pp. 66, 68, 72.

15. Ibid., p. 68.

16. Ibid., pp. 68, 70.

17. Ibid., pp. 43, 59, 69; High Hill, k3y k3; primeval mound, hcy wr.

18. Ibid., pp. 83-84.

19. Ibid., p. 86.

20. Ibid., pp. 74, 85.

21. Ibid., p. 68.

22. Ibid., p. 67 n. 6.

23. Ibid., pp. 30-31.

24. Ibid., pp. 103, 110.

25. Ibid., pp. 94-95, 103; Heter-her, htr-hr.

26. Ibid., p. 96.

27. Ibid., p. 99.

28. Ibid; Mansion of Isden, hwt-isdn.

29. Ibid., pp. 99-100.

30. Ibid., pp. 107-108; Sound eye, wd3t.

31. Ibid., p. 108.

32. Ibid., p. 114.

33. Ibid., p. 118; Ancesters, tpyw-c; Ghosts, ddw.

34. Ibid., pp. 109-110.

35. Ibid., pp. 15, 110, 115-116, 118; Underworld of the Soul, dw3t n B3.

36. Ibid., p. 109; water, wa cret.

37. Ibid., p. 110.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., p. 131.

40. For example, PT [Pyramid Text] 261, 325, where Faulkner interprets Aker as “earth.”

41. Curiously, this breakdown of the name Sokar is given within a margin annotation on page 131 of my own copy of Reymond’s *The Mythical Origin of the Egyptian Temple*. It comes after a line speaking of the nameless creator god of the Island of Trampling, mentioning that although the earth god has funerary associations, he is also represented as a Falcon (drty). The annotator has written: Sokar s +/Aker, “cause of earth.”

42. “Papyrus of Ani,” ch. 17, l. 113, from Budge, *The Book of the Dead*, Vol. 2, p. 108. Soul of Geb, ba n Geb’.

43. PT 296, 439, Geb as the father of the twin snakes, hmt and hmtt; 230, 231-34, Unas is bitten by a snake, and he in turn bites Geb, showing that they are the twin snakes naw and nat that bite each other; 385, 674-78, twin snakes, hfnw and hfnnt, to which Geb is cited as father. On Geb as a serpent, see also S. Hassan, *Season 1934-35*, p. 259.

44. Budge, *Fetish*, p. 19.

Chapter Eight—Fall of the First Occasion

1. Reymond, pp. 19, 34, 195 snake, r3; also sbty, p. 35; Great Leaping One, nhp-wr, p. 113.

2. Ibid, p. 35.

3. See Clube and Napier, *The Cosmic Serpent*, for a full account of the relationship between comets, flying serpents, and catastrophes.

4. See the author's *Gateway to Atlantis*, and "Firestorm from space," <http://space.newscientist.com/article/mg19426052.900-firestorm-from-space-wiped-out-prehistoric-americans.html>; Firestone, West, and Warwick-Smith, *Cycle of Cosmic Catastrophes*; Firestone et al, "New Insights."

5. Kloosterman, "The Usselo Horizon," unpublished paper (see "Manuscripts" section of bibliography).

6. Hoffman, *Egypt Before the Pharaohs*, p. 90. See also F. Hassan, "Note on Sebilian Sites," pp. 11-16.

7. Hoffman, p. 90.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 89.

10. Ibid., pp. 79-80, 82, 87.

11. Ibid., p. 89.

12. Ibid., pp. 87-89; Wendorf and Schild, *Prehistory of the Nile Valley*, pp. 289-291.

13. Hoffman, pp. 88-89; Clark, Fage, and Oliver, *Cambridge History of Africa*, p. 370.

14. Hoffman, p. 89.

15. See, for instance, Brass, "Interaction between Man,"
<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Troy/7365/academic_discussion/history/brass

16. Hoffman, pp. 89-90.

17. Ibid., p. 90.

18. See Wendorf, *The Prehistory of Nubia*, Vol. 1. p. 954.

19. Ibid; Midant-Reynes and Shaw, *The Prehistory of Egypt*, p. 64.

20. Midant-Reynes and Shaw, p. 64.

21. Hoffman, p. 97.

22. Midant-Reynes and Shaw, p. 64.

23. Ibid.

24. Hoffman, p. 97.

25. Midant-Reynes and Shaw, p. 64.

26. See Firestone, West, and Warwick-Smith, pp. 132-148, for a graphic account of the suspected aftermath of the comet event of c. 11,000 BC.

27. Reymond, p. 194.

28. Ibid., pp. 15. n. 1 and 2, 138.

29. Ibid., p. 142; water, mw.

30. Ibid., pp. 152-4, 161-162; Place-in-which-the-things-of-the-earth-were-filled-with-power, bw-sw-iht-t3-im.

31. Ibid., pp. 28-31, 153-4.

32. Ibid., p. 27.

33. Ibid., p. 263

34. Ibid., pp. 261-62, 312, 317.

35. Ibid., p. 262.

36. Ibid., p. 70.

37. Ibid, p. 103.

38. Budge, Dictionary, s.v. "benn," p. 217a.

39. Forman and Quirke, p. 60.

40. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols*, p. 127.

41. "Shiva Linga," Maha Shivratri, <<http://www.mahashivratri.org/shiva-linga.html>>.

42. Gimbutas, *The Living Goddesses*, p. 60.

43. Reymond, pp. 25-26, 152, 155-57, 181, 200.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26, 155-57.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

50. Ibid., p. 157.

51. See Collins, *Gods of Eden*, chs. 13 & 14.

Chapter Nine—Place of the Well

1. The initial information regarding the well Bir el-Samman came from Gouda Fayed, a lifelong resident of Nazlet el-Samman, via Egyptological researcher and writer Chris Ogilvie-Herald. The original inspiration behind the search for the well came from a vivid dream experienced by my friend and colleague David Southwell in November 1998.

2. S. Hassan, *Season 1932-33*, pp. 160, 167.

3. McLean and Lee, *Revisiting the Sacred*, p. 171.

4. This legend was conveyed to me by Ehab Fayed of Guardian Travel.

5. Hugh Lynn Cayce, "Seals," p. 2.

6. Ibid. and Cayce reading 294-8.

7. Hugh Lynn Cayce, "Seals," p. 2.

8. Ibid., p. 3.

9. See the sections on life seals and aura charts in Shelley, *Symbols and the Self*, especially pp. 29-47.

10. This story was retold to the author in March 2008 by Ehab Fayed of Guardian Travel, who played by the well with his brothers as a child.

11. Ibid.

12. Buhl, "Goddesses," p. 80.

13. Ibid., p. 87.

14. For the text of the Inventory Stela, see S. Hassan, *Season 1936-37*, pp. 113-15; *Breasted*, Vol. 1, pp. 177-180. For further confirmation of the presence in Giza of the Southern Sycamore, see Malek, Magee, and Miles, "Topographical Bibliography," <<http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/s21.html>>.

15. S. Hassan, *Season 1936-37*, p. 117.

16. Stadelmann, “The Great Sphinx of Giza,” pp. 464-69. See also the work of British geologist Colin Reader, in particular “Giza Before the Fourth Dynasty,” pp. 5-21. He argues that the Sphinx formed part of an earlier construction complex in Giza dating from the Early Dynastic period, most likely the Second Dynasty, c. 2800 BC.

17. Reymond, p. 81 n. 2.

18. S. Hassan, Season 1936-37, p. 251.

19. Reymond, p. 156.

20. Reymond, “Worship,” p. 54, Mansion of ms-nht, wrt-ms-nht.

21. See Cox, “A Sanctuary for Sokar,” pp. 390-6, for his work with mathematician and geometrician David Ritchie and Egyptologist Jacqueline Pegg on Gebel Gibli, Sokar, and the site of the Shetayet shrine.

Chapter Ten—Pyramid Precision

1. Lehner, Giza Reports, p. 54. See also Lehner, “High-precision measure,” AERA Web site, <http://www.aeraweb.org/gpmp_grid.asp>.

2. Derived from the following calculations: Azimuth G2 (Second Pyramid) from center of apex circle = 307.45. Azimuth G2 from Gebel Gibli datum point = 306.75. Azimuth of bisector of equilateral triangle = 307.85.

3. The Tomb of the Birds is 55 yards (50 meters) due west of the western corner of the triangle's east-west line.

4. Derived from the following calculations: Azimuth of hypotenuse of 3:4:5 triangle = 306.87. Azimuth of bisector of equilateral triangle = 307.85. Azimuth G2 from Gebel Gibli = 306.75. Azimuth G2 from center of apex circle = 307.45.

5. James, *Music of the Spheres*, pp. 20-40.

6. Kamil, *Coptic Egypt*, p. 55.

7. *Ibid.* See also Levin, *Manual of Harmonics*, pp. 45-46, and commentary on pp. 47-57 regarding the relationship between the seven-note musical scale and the seven stars, i.e., the planets.

8. Hornung, *Secret Lore of Egypt*, p. 22.

9. Only one, the 7:1 triangle linking Gebel Gibli with the Third Pyramid, is very slightly out—it being 65.5 feet (20 meters) short of its peak.

10. Edwards, p. 28.
11. Translation from S. Hassan, Season 1936-37, pp. 94-95.
12. Cox, pp. 390-96.
13. Aigner, "Pliocene Cliff-line," p. 317.
14. Groom, Dictionary, s.v. "Tar" and "Tarf, Tarf," p. 286.
15. Cayce reading 417-1.
16. Cayce reading, 341-8.
17. Cayce readings 5540-5; also see 1717-1.
18. Cayce reading, 5748-6.

Chapter Eleven—Horizon of Khufu

1. PT [Pyramid Text] 519, 1218.

2. PT 519, 1220; 519, 1216; 520, 1222. See also Faulkner, "The King," pp. 153-7, for further PT references linking the deceased king with the Imperishable Stars.

3. See, for instance, PT 273-4, 405.

4. Belmonte, "Orientations," pp. S1-20. See also Parker, "Egyptian Astronomy," p. 718.

5. PT 478, 971; 478, 979; 478, 980; 572, 1474.

6. For a full treatment of the relationship between the star Sah and Orion, and Sah and Osiris, see Coppens, *The Canopus Revelation*, pp. 28-32, and also "The Sirius lore" by Assem Deif, Professor of Mathematics at Cairo University and Misr University for Science and Technology, which confirms Coppen's findings regarding Canopus being both Sah and the star of Osiris. See the *Al-Ahram Weekly* (June 6th—July 2nd, 2008) 903, under Deif, Assem, available at <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/903/heritage.htm>>.

7. Lehner, *Pyramids*, p. 130.

8. Edwards, *The Pyramids of Egypt*, p. 294.

9. Lehner, *Pyramids*, p. 34.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

11. S. Hassan, *Season 1938-39*, p. ii.

12. Vyse, Vol. 2, p. 349, cf. Yahya, Vol. 1, Uri's Cat. 900, Bodleian Library, cf. *Mem. De l'Acad. Des Inscriptions*, Vol. 1, p. 354.

13. *Ibid.*

14. S. Hassan, *Season 1938-39*, p. ii.

15. Kahl, *Ra is my Lord*, pp. 2, 2 n. 10.

16. Richard Wilkinson, *Complete Gods and Goddesses*, pp. 205-6. See also Bauval, *The Egypt Code*, pp. 78-79, 85, 91-95, for the argument that ReHorakhty is the constellation of Leo.

17. See Hartner, "Earliest History," pp. 1-16.

Chapter Twelve—Reflections of Heaven

1. Based on an average of lines featuring the Second Pyramid (G2) and Gebel Gibli: Azimuth G2 from Gebel Gibli = 306.75. Azimuth G2 from center of apex circle = 307.45. Azimuth of hypotenuse of 3:4:5 triangle = 306.87. Azimuth of bisector of equilateral triangle = 307.85. If we take all four, the average is 307.23, i.e., azimuth 307 degrees, 15 minutes, with +/- 0.5 degrees variation. Calculations based on Petrie's 1880-81 survey.

2. All astronomical calculations achieved using StarryNight Pro version 4.5.0 and checked against Red Shift 5.1, based on a date of 2600 BC. At a 3-degree altitude Sadr was at azimuth 307 degrees, 40 minutes. This would have been extremely close to its probable extinction point. At 307 degrees Sadr would have been at an altitude of 4 degrees, with Gienah at just 6 minutes. It is possible that the original alignment was meant to work at the last moment that all three Cygnus "wing" stars were visible on the horizon before the lowest one, Gienah, extinguished. However, even though refraction will have elevated Gienah by as much as 30 arc minutes as it reached extinction point, there is no way of knowing its exact moment of extinction, making further calculations difficult. At azimuth 307 degrees, 15 minutes, Sadr was at altitude 3 degrees, 39 minutes, which is also close enough to its assumed extinction point.

3. An estimated height of 8 degrees, 30 minutes, for the Second Pyramid's apex is derived from visual calculations taken from the summit of Gebel Gibli and available raw data on the heights of Gebel Gibli and the Second Pyramid. In 2550 BC, Deneb crossed an azimuth of 307 degrees, 8 minutes, at an altitude of 8 degrees, 35 minutes. At 307 degrees, 15 minutes, Deneb was at an altitude of 8 degrees, 24 minutes. Both positions are consistent with the view that the star would have been eclipsed by the apex of the Second Pyramid.

4. PT [Pyramid Text] 437, 802.

5. See Bauval and Gilbert.

6. The Milky Way, through its identification with the mythical river known as the Eradinus, the Stream of Ocean, or River of Heaven, was seen as the celestial counterpart, or even an extension, of the River Nile. See Allen, *Star Names*, s.v. “Eridanus,” pp. 215-220, & s.v. “The Galaxy, or Milky Way,” pp. 475-85.

7. The origin of the Nazlet el-Samman place-name was offered to me by a number of local residents. No other alternatives were given.

8. Allen, s.v. “Cygnus, the Swan,” pp. 192-98.

9. *Ibid.*

Chapter Thirteen—The Light of Ascension

1. Ibn Abd Al Hakm, who died AH 269 (AD 882), only 38 years after the forced entry into the Great Pyramid by the caliph al-Ma'mun, tells of a jewel-bedecked body in armor with a large carbuncle, or ruby, placed on its forehead, being found in what appears to be the sarcophagus of the King's Chamber. See Bonwick, *Pyramid Facts and Fancies*, pp. 41-42. Al Raisi says he saw the “case,” or coffin, from which the body was taken “standing in the Cairo palace-door in the year AH 511 (1117 AD).” See *ibid.*, p. 42. Other Arab writers speak of this discovery as well.

2. Bauval, “The Seeding of the Star-gods,” in *The Secret Chamber*, by Bauval,

pp. 368-73.

3. Badawi, "Stellar Destiny," pp. 189-206. See also Trimble, "Astronomical Investigation," pp. 183-187.

4. Bauval, "Seeding of the Star-gods," pp. 368-73.

5. Dörnenburg, "Technical Examinations,"
<http://doernenburg.alien.de/alternativ/orion/ori03_e.php>.

6. Budge, Cleopatra's Needles, pp. 11, 21.

7. See Musaios, The Lion Path, p. 67.

8. Allen, s.v. "Cygnus, the Swan," pp. 192-98.

9. Wells, "Re and the Calendars," p. 10.

10. Ibid.; Wells, "Origin of the Hour," SAK 20, pp. 314-18.

11. Wells, SAK 20, pp. 310-12.

12. Ibid., p. 315.

13. Ibid., p. 314.

14. Gregory of Tours, *De cursu stellarum*.

15. Ross, "The Bird," <<http://www.twcac.org/onlinehorizon/cross.htm>>.

16. Belmonte Avilés, "Some open questions," pp. 7-56.

17. Berens, "It's Later Than You Think," ARCE Northern California Web site, <<http://home.comcast.net/~hebsed/wells.htm>>.

18. Wells, SAK 20, p. 318.

19. See Collins, *The Cygnus Mystery*.

Chapter Fourteen—The Womb of God

1. Wells, "Mythology of Nut," SAK 19, pp. 308-10; Wells, "Re," pp. 4-5.

2. Wells, SAK 19, pp. 309-10, 314; “Re,” p. 5.

3. Wells, SAK 19, pp. 315-17; Wells, “Re,” p. 6.

4. Wells, SAK 19, p. 318.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., pp. 312-15, 319; Wells, “Re,” p. 6.

7. Wells, SAK 19, p. 314; Wells, “Re,” pp. 6, 8.

8. Wells, SAK 19, p. 318; Wells, “Re,” pp. 6, 8-9.

9. Wells, “Re,” p. 8.

10. Ibid., p. 22.

11. Gimbutas, *Language of the Goddess*, pp. 185, 265.

12. See Wendorf and Schild, “Late Neolithic megalithic structures,”

<<http://www.comp-archaeology.org/WendorfSAA98.html>>, and also Hendrickx, "Bovines," pp. 275-318.

13. PT [Pyramid Text] 254, 280.

14. Hendrickx, p. 298.

15. "Papyrus of Ani," Sheet 2, in *Gods of the Egyptians*, Vol. 2, by Budge, p. 153.

16. Budge, *Gods of the Egyptians*, Vol. 1, p. 257.

17. Hoffman, p. 91.

18. PT 364, 616.

19. Shaefer, Arnold, and Haeny, *Temples of Ancient Egypt*, p. 71 & n. 120.

20. Hart, s.v. "Nut," pp. 110-12. See also Budge, *Dictionary*, s.v. "Shtait," p. 756a.

21. Budge, *Dictionary*, s.v. "shta-t," p. 755b; s.v. "Shtai," p. 755b; s.v. "shta-t," p. 756a; "shtai-t," p. 756a.

22. Ibid., s.v. “shta-t,” p. 756a.

23. Ibid., s.v. “Shtait,” p. 756a. This is also a form of Nuit, see *ibid.*, s.v. “Shtait,” p. 756a.

24. Lehner, *Pyramids*, pp. 28-29.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

26. Wells, SAK 20, p. 318. For further elaboration on the relationship between the celestial womb of Nut, the Milky Way, and the Cygnus constellation, see Maravelia, “Cosmic Space and Archetypal Time,” S. 55-72.

Chapter Fifteen—Tomb of the Birds

1. Vyse, Vol. I, 1.

2. Raymond Wilkinson, “Search for Imhotep,” *Travel in Style*, <http://www.travelinstyle.com/egypt/suggeste_Imhotep.htm>.

3. Perring, folio plan, *The Pyramids of Gizeh*.

4. Vyse, Vol 1, p. 238.

5. Porter, Moss, and Malek, *Topographical Bibliography*.

6. See Smith and Davies, *Sacred Animal Necropolis*, especially pl. 12a for the slots in the wall, and pl. 11 a-d, for comparisons with the entrance to the Tomb of the Birds.

7. This eventually became Collins and Skinner-Simpson, “The Giza Catacombs—A Possible Entrance Identified,” pre-publication, 2008.

Chapter Sixteen—The Lost Catacombs

1. See Iamblichus (P. Christian), *An Egyptian Initiation*.

2. In *The Sphinx Mystery*, pp. 100-103, Robert Temple, writing with his wife Olivia Temple, makes the claim that Giovanni Caviglia actually found and entered a secret chamber containing hieroglyphics, accessed via a hole in the back of the Sphinx. Since no specific references to this chamber exist, the Temples speculate that its existence was subsequently covered up to keep it a secret. However, through some diligent research, Nigel Skinner-Simpson and I have discovered that Caviglia did not find a secret chamber inside the Sphinx. The reference they cite in connection with their claims in fact alludes to tomb chambers examined by Caviglia and accessed via the enclosure wall behind the Sphinx. For the full story see my review “The Sphinx Mystery by Robert Temple with Olivia Temple” in *Earthquest News* 12:1 (May 2009), pp. 5-12, available to

view online,

<http://www.andrewcollins.com/page/news/News_vii_EQ12%20_1_May2009.ht

3. Halls Esq., Henry Salt, Vol. 2, p. 92.

4. Usick and Manley, *The Sphinx Revealed*, p. 62 (Salt, MSS 53-5).

5. *Ibid.* p. 15 (Salt, “Ground-Sketch of the Pyramids of Gheza,” Reference Q.Q.).

6. *Ibid.* p. 74.

Chapter Seventeen—Wonderful Discoveries

1. See S. Hassan, *The Sphinx*, p. 50.

2. S. Hassan, *Season 1938-39*, p. 5.

3. *Divine Creatures*, map on p. xvii, list on p. xx.

4. Salima Ikram, e-mail to Nigel Skinner-Simpson dated July 17, 2009.

Chapter Eighteen—Egyptian Aftermath

1. Forman and Quirke, caption to Late Period sarcophagus on p. 162.
2. See Dungen, “The Book of the Cow of Heaven,”
<http://www.ma'at.sofiatopia.org/heavenly_cow2.htm>.
3. Vyse, Vol. 2, p. 149.
4. Budge, Egyptian Heaven, Vol. 1, p. 259.
5. Goodwin, Graeco-Egyptian Work upon Magic.
6. Wake, Origin and Significance, p. 67, cf. Charles François Dupuis, L'Origine de tous les Cultes (Chez. H. Agasse, Paris, 1795), Vol. 1, p. 424.

Chapter Twenty—The Prophecy of el-Hanash

1. Doyle, “Botswana ‘snake rock,’ ”
<<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L30693310.htm>>.

2. See Narby, *The Cosmic Serpent*, for the connections between the symbol of the serpent and DNA. Also my own book, *The Cygnus Mystery*.

Postscript

1. John Van Auken, e-mail to the author dated February 16, 2009: “After seeing your photos, he [Dr. Zahi Hawass] personally told me while I was in Egypt that he did not think these caves had been investigated by anyone he knows.”

2. John Van Auken, e-mail to the author dated May 22, 2009: “I specifically told Zahi about your discovery, how you made it, and showed him your photos of the cave opening. When he saw the cave opening, he said: ‘I don’t think this has ever been investigated. Thank you for sharing this with me. I’ll look into it.’ ”

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ISBN 978-0-87604-571-8



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