21st Century Look at Ancient Egyptian Architecture

David L. Finnigan

Major Outline

I. Early Development – Materials and Structures
II. Temples
III. Relation to Later Architecture
Early Development

• Influencing Factors
  – Nile
  – Climate
  – Natural Materials
  – Social Conditions

Early Development

• First Structure: The House
  – Types:
    • Pole and covering
    • Wattle and Thatch Hut
    • Mud House
    • Square House

  – Other Features
Temples

• Egyptian Math and Geometry
  – Golden Section 8:5
  – Numerical System
  – No \( \pi \) and no \( \phi \)

Temples

• Imhotep and the III Dynasty
  – Capital established at Memphis
  – First great architect
  – Lead the “stone revolution”
  – First great monument: Step Pyramid
Step Pyramid at Saqqara

• Oldest pyramid in the world
• Built for King Zoser
• Form is of stacked mastabas
Temple of Deir el-Bahari

- Built for Queen Hatsheput
- Architect was Senenmut
- Traditional niche treatment
- Partially destroyed by Thutmose III
Temple of Amon-Re, Karnak

• Largest columnar structure built
• Largest religious structure in the world
• Brought about by wealth of sun-worshippers
• Key points:
  – Size
  – Lack of unity
Temple of Kom Ombo

- Ptolemaic
- Situated toward river
- Double temple for two separate rituals
- Shows a clear Graeco-Roman influence
Relation to Later Architecture

• Egyptians were influenced by Greeks/Romans and vice-versa

• Common Forms:
  – Column
  – Post and Beam
  – Colonnade
  – Portico

Some Examples

• Hall of Pillars – Caryatids
• Temple of Kom Ombo – post and beam, entablature
• Step Pyramid Temple – columns and capitals
• Dado
• Frieze Cornice