

Pyramids of Giza



The Great Pyramid of Giza[a] is the largest Egyptian pyramid and served as the tomb of pharaoh Khufu, who ruled during the Fourth Dynasty of the Old Kingdom. Built c. 2600 BC,[3] over a period of about 27 years,[4] the pyramid is the oldest of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and the only wonder that has remained largely intact. It is the most famous monument of the Giza pyramid complex, which is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Memphis and its Necropolis".[5] It is situated at the northeastern end of the line of the three main pyramids at Giza.

Initially standing at 146.6 metres (481 feet), the Great Pyramid was the world's tallest human-made structure for more than 3,800 years. Over time, most of the smooth white limestone casing was removed, which lowered the pyramid's height to the current 138.5 metres (454.4 ft); what is seen today is the underlying core structure.

PURPOSE OF GREAT PYRAMIDS OF GIZA

Purpose

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The Great Pyramid's burial chambers lack inscriptions and decorations, the norm for Egyptian tombs of the fourth to late fifth dynasty, apart from work-gang graffiti that include Khufu's names.[19] Constructed around 2600 BC, it predates the custom of inscribing pyramids with text by over 200 years.[20][3]

The pyramid complex of Khufu included two temples that were lavishly decorated and inscribed. The pyramid temple was dedicated to the Sed festival, celebrating Khufu's 30th jubilee.[21] Surviving scenes show Khufu as well as officials, priests and other characters. The valley temple remains largely unexcavated, but blocks reused by Amenemhat I depict, for instance, nautical scenes and personifications of the estates of Khufu (e.g. the estate "Khufu is beautiful").[22] The mortuary cult of Khufu which operated in these temples for hundreds of years indicates that Khufu was successfully interred in the Great Pyramid.[23]

Attribution to Khufu

Historically the Great Pyramid had been attributed to Khufu based on the words of authors of classical antiquity, first and foremost Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus. During the Middle Ages other people were credited with the construction of the pyramid as well, for example Joseph from the Book of Genesis, Nimrod, or the legendary king Saurid ibn Salhouk.[27]

In 1837 four additional Relieving Chambers were found above the King's Chamber after tunneling to them. The chambers, previously inaccessible, were covered in hieroglyphs of red paint. The workers who were building the pyramid had marked the blocks with the names of their gangs, which included the pharaoh's name (e.g.: "The gang, The white crown of Khnum-

Khufu is powerful"). The names of Khufu were spelled out on the walls over a dozen times. Another of these graffiti was found by Goyon on an exterior block of the 4th layer of the pyramid.[28] The inscriptions are comparable to those found at other sites of Khufu, such as the alabaster quarry at Hatnub[29] or the harbor at Wadi al-Jarf, and are present in pyramids of other pharaohs as well.[30][31]

Throughout the 20th century the cemeteries next to the pyramid were excavated. Family members and high officials of Khufu were buried in the East Field south of the causeway, and the West Field. Most notably the wives, children and grandchildren of Khufu, Hemiunu, Ankhaf and (the funerary cache of) Hetepheres I, mother of Khufu.

HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

Historical

In the past the Great Pyramid was dated by its attribution to Khufu alone, putting the construction of the Great Pyramid within his reign. Hence dating the pyramid was a matter of dating Khufu and the 4th dynasty. The relative sequence and synchronicity of events is the focal point of this method.

Absolute calendar dates are derived from an interlocked network of evidence, the backbone of which are the lines of succession known from ancient king lists and other texts. The reign lengths from Khufu to known points in the earlier past are summated, bolstered with genealogical data, astronomical observations, and other sources. As such, the historical chronology of Egypt is primarily a political chronology, thus independent from other types of archaeological evidence like stratigraphies, material culture, or radiocarbon dating.

The majority of recent chronological estimates date Khufu and his pyramid roughly between 2700 and 2500 BC.[54]

CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY

Herodotus

The ancient Greek historian Herodotus, writing in the 5th century BC, is one of the first major authors to mention the pyramid. In the second book of his work *The Histories*, he discusses the history of Egypt and the Great Pyramid. This report was created more than 2000 years after the structure was built, meaning that Herodotus obtained his knowledge mainly from a variety of indirect sources, including officials and priests of low rank, local Egyptians, Greek immigrants, and Herodotus's own interpreters. Accordingly, his explanations present themselves as a mixture of comprehensible descriptions, personal descriptions, erroneous reports, and

fantastical legends; as a result, many of the speculative errors and confusions about the monument can be traced back to Herodotus and his work.[61][62]s