

Ancient African Civilizations

LD 7: “This Old Pyramid” Video Review and Exercise

Introduction: Experimental archaeology is that area of archaeology that seeks to find answers to some of the most perplexing questions about ancient cultures and technologies. In their efforts to resolve the mysteries of the past, experimental archaeologists have taken to reconstructing and using ancient technologies thought used in antiquity. Examples range from the reconstruction of ancient ceramic vessels through the re-creation of metal works and monuments. In the video that you will review today, you will have the opportunity to review the varied means by which ancient pyramid builders are thought to have constructed the pyramids of Egypt. By way of their respective attempts at reconstructing such a monument, you will be introduced to varying ideas on how the pyramids were constructed.

Instructions: Your task is to predict the success or likelihood that such techniques were actually used in the original construction of the pyramids of Giza Plateau. In thinking about your predictions about such ancient building techniques, you should be prepared to discuss why it is that you believe that you are correct in your respective interpretation. Use the questions below as a guide to thinking about the video and its contents.

Questions

1. Given the many ideas that exist about the pyramids of Egypt, what do you believe motivated the builders to construct such massive monuments? Given their immense size, do you believe that such monuments were strictly intended as funerary or mortuary monuments?
2. Given the otherwise complex geometry and mathematics, and astronomical considerations, that apparently went into the layout and construction of the pyramids, do you believe that the pyramids have as close a relationship to the celestial vault, stars, and cosmos as implied by the video? Why or why not?
3. You will hear several archaeologists, builders, and mathematicians describe their respective theories about how they believe the pyramids were constructed. Given these many and diverse explanations, which of the techniques discussed individually or collectively do you believe would provide the most appropriate explanation for the technologies ultimately utilized in the construction of the pyramids of Giza?
4. Finally, given the outcomes of the experiments conducted, do you believe that the parameters and methods used to reconstruct the pyramid in question were wholly appropriate to resolving the question at hand (i.e., How were the pyramids constructed?)? Why or why not?