The Complete
Temples of Ancient Egypt

RICHARD H. WILKINSON

With 535 illustrations, 173 in color

Thames & Hudson
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II  BUILDINGS FIT FOR GODS
Construction, Growth and Change

‘May you build a house, may you embellish a sanctuary, and may you consecrate my godly place.’

Words spoken by Amun to Hatshepsut

The Egyptian temple was rooted deep within the myths and memories of times ancient even to the Egyptians themselves. Each ‘house of god’ was thus planned, founded and constructed with the utmost care, according to traditions which had developed through extended historical time. Not only was the site for every temple carefully chosen, with the exact alignment of the new building often being precisely calculated, but it was also carefully prepared with complex and arcane rituals. Once the necessary rituals of foundation were enacted, actual construction could commence – with choice stone and other materials often being brought from great distances for the new house of the god.

Constructed with great skill, despite the simple tools available to the ancient craftsmen, the temples of Egypt were finely built and decorated to the degree that even minor shrines are sometimes architectural jewels and many of the larger temples ranked as wonders of the ancient world. As institutions, they stretched beyond the boundaries of their own walls in many ways and functioned as integral and vital parts of their communities’ lives and economies.

Even long after they were initially built, Egypt’s temples often continued to grow – with succeeding kings striving to outdo their predecessors in expanding, embellishing and enriching the gods’ homes. But they were also robbed, torn down for their building materials or simply reinscribed by usurping monarchs who wished to claim them as their own exploits. Without an understanding of these changes – subtle and brutal alike – it is all but impossible to grasp the complex and tangled story of formation and transformation in many temple buildings.

The ornate screen wall of the Roman birth house at Dendera.
Selecting the Sacred Space

Egyptian temples were usually located and oriented according to some significant point – whether an important natural feature, a building or place, a cardinal direction or an astronomical point. In the broader sense, the choice of location might be governed by ancient myths and traditions – such as the supposed site of a god's ‘birthplace’ or ‘grave’, or some natural feature believed to have numinous power or associations. But in the narrower sense, temple location was usually controlled by practical factors such as proximity to population centres, travel routes or necessary resources. Sometimes, exact temple location could be affected by the special needs of a particular cult. The location of the Osirion in the temple of Sethos I at Abydos, for example, is due to the proximity of a natural spring. This seems to have been used to provide a pool of water around the subterranean ‘grave’ in order to make it a model of the mythical mound of creation which the Egyptians believed rose from the primeval waters.

The orientation of temples

Orientation within a site or general location could be controlled by several factors. Most commonly, temples built along the Nile were oriented on an east–west axis (p. 172) according to local cardinal directions as determined by the river. Because the Nile flows from south to north it was fitting, according to the Egyptian sense of geographic space, to align temples at 90 degrees to the river – though variations in the river's course often caused temples aligned in this manner to be oriented only according to ‘local’ rather than true cardinal directions. While some of these alignments seem to have been made quite precisely, at other times temples were apparently oriented much more loosely. Many of the New Kingdom mortuary temples, for example, were built on the Nile's north bank, facing south, in order to face each of their respective pharaohs, as if they were aligned to a northern cardinal direction. This alignment was determined by the supposed direction of the ‘solar journey’, the path of the sun as it rose in the east and set in the west. By facing south, the temples were believed to be facing the rising sun, which was the chief deity, Atum, whose name could mean ‘opening of the mouth’. Thus, south was the direction of the rising sun, and also the direction of the horizon – an axis around which the Egyptians believed the world was ordered.

Less obvious is the importance of any primeval mound or location. Among these geographical factors, the temple itself is orientated in its relative space.

On the other hand, in important religious and geographical terms, the rising sun was a key aspect of solar orientation. The sun was clearly the most obvious and crucial element in temple orientation; the summer solstice being the most apparent and important time of the year.

The Theban temple area, on the other hand, is broadly oriented toward the rising sun. The sun was not oriented at the Pyramid complex, for example, but Stela 18 of the pyramid complex indicates that the early temples were built to face the rising sun. There is some evidence that the Siptah temple was built to face the rising sun, but this is not certain. The sun was often associated with the god Aton, whose temple was built to face the rising sun. Thus, the orientation of the temple was important for its religious purpose.
Kingdom mortuary temples of the Theban west bank which were built within a few generations of each other were given slightly different orientations, although all share a basic east–west alignment. Once built, temples were also given their own internal east–west orientation by means of solar images positioned along the temple’s axis and by cardinal opposed decorative motifs – such as the various heraldic symbols of Lower and Upper Egypt, or scenes from those regions, which were placed on the respective ‘north’ and ‘south’ walls, columns, and other architectural features.

Less frequently, as at Luxor and Edfu, a temple’s main axis might run north–south, though this kind of atypical orientation is usually dictated by the location of earlier structures (as was the case with these two temples), or by geographic and topographical factors. The orientation of Amun’s temple in Luxor was oriented towards the main Karnak temple, and the Ptolemaic temple at Edfu was oriented at right angles to the earlier east–west oriented New Kingdom temple on the same location.

On occasion, orientation towards the sun or important stars was definitely the priority, and this principle may be more important than is often recognized. In the Great Temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel (p. 226), for example, and in shrines of the solar-disc worshipper Alkenaten, alignment was clearly made to permit maximum or precisely controlled influx of sunlight. It is possible that some temples may have been oriented according to the summer solstice sun, but research in this area is at present only beginning.

There is also clear evidence of stellar alignment in temples such as that at Elephantine, the island opposite modern-day Aswan, which was oriented towards the star Sothis (Sirius) whose heliacal rising announced the annual flooding of the Nile. Stellar alignment could also be based on mythological factors. The 11th-dynasty mud-brick temple built by Sankhkare Mentuhiotep atop the peak known as Thoth Hill in western Thebes was on a slightly different orientation from the earlier stone temple built on the same site in Archaic times. The Hungarian team excavating these structures believes that this difference may be attributed to the shift in astronomical alignments over the intervening centuries.

Their research indicates that the later brick temple was aligned towards the heliacal rising of the star Sirius. In the Archaic period the same star would have appeared just over 2 degrees further south in the eastern sky – exactly the difference visible in the orientation of the earlier building. Thus, rather than simply following the physical orientation of the early sacred structure, the Middle Kingdom architects had carefully adjusted the temple’s orientation in order to align the new building once more precisely with Sirius – which was equated with Horus, the patron deity of the temple.
Rituals of Foundation

“Laying out the foundation ground which was made in the Temple... according to that which is in the book 'The delineation of the sacred mounds...’

— From the Edfu Inscriptions

Construction of all religious buildings in ancient Egypt began with ceremonies which were of very ancient origin. Comparison of texts and representations from many sites show that the complete foundation ceremonies consisted of as many as ten discrete rites, most of which were enacted before actual construction could begin. In theory, the rites were conducted by the king himself, assisted by various deities, and consisted of:

1. Fixing the plan of the building by 'stretching the cord'
2. Scattering gypsum on the assigned area to purify it
3. Digging the first foundation trench
4. Pouring sand into the foundation trench
5. Moulding the first brick or bricks
6. Placement of foundation deposits at the corners of the structure, etc.
7. Initiation of the work of building
8. Purification of the completed temple
9. Presentation of the temple to its intended deities
10. Offering of sacrifices

Late texts, such as that found in the Ptolemaic temple at Edfu, include other aspects of the king’s performance such as departing from the palace and arriving at the site of the new temple.

The ten elements set out here include all the essential rites of earlier lists such as that of Thutmose III depicted on the walls of the Small Temple at Medinet Habu. Of all these rituals, the first—known as the pedi-shes or 'stretching the cord'—was of particular importance. Originally simply one of the foundation rites, pedi-shes became by extension the name of the whole group of foundation ceremonies, or at least those which preceded the actual work of construction. The rite involved the careful orientation of the temple by astronomical observation and measurement. Apparently this was usually accomplished by sighting the stars of a northern circumpolar constellation through a notched wooden instrument called a merkhet, and thus acquiring a true north–south orientation which was commonly used for the temple’s short axis. According to the texts, the king was assisted in this rite by Seshat or Sfkhet-Aby, the scribal goddess of writing and measurement, though the actual alignment was probably ascertained by temple personnel at a time conducive to observation prior to the beginning of the ceremonies. It may thus only have been acted out symbolically by the king in the performance of the rite.

While it is impossible without specific information to know how many of these foundation activities were actually conducted by the pharaoh in the building of a specific temple, in theory each was the king’s prerogative. Indeed, all stages of temple construction were performed at least symbolically by him.

Foundation deposits

During or soon after the foundation ceremony, foundation deposits consisting of small votive plaques, bricks, models of building tools or food offerings, and often the head of a bull and a goose, were placed in shallow pits near the outer corners of the temple being built and sometimes also on the axis,
at the corners of individual halls and courtyards, along the main processional route of the temple, and beneath some pylons, columns and obelisks. These votive objects were usually models of a purely symbolic nature. On the whole they were made of clay, wood or some other simple material and only quite unusually of more expensive or rarer substances, though deposits of the Late Period sometimes include small samples of materials actually used in the building.

Interestingly, such foundation deposits are frequently uninscribed or inscribed with only the briefest of texts. When they are present, Middle and New Kingdom temple foundation inscriptions usually simply state the name of the king responsible for commissioning the building and, not uncommonly, the deity to whom the temple or feature was dedicated according to the formula: 'The good god (King X) belonged to (Deity Y) [Lord of (City or Temple Z)].'

(Right) Vessels, plaques and other items from a foundation deposit of Nectanebo I at Tell el-Bahram.

(Left) Plan and section of a foundation pit with niche.

(Below) An artist’s reconstruction of a typical temple foundation deposit.

Examples of Foundation Deposit Contents

Although temple foundation deposits differed widely, it was especially common for tools, vessels and certain other items to be included. The following contents from selected deposit pits of Tuthmosis III show the range typical of many foundation deposits:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temple</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Vessels</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temple at Abydos (deposit 82)</td>
<td>4 tool blades</td>
<td>1 large dish</td>
<td>1 alabaster ointment jar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple at Koptos (deposit 7)</td>
<td>around a dozen model tool blades</td>
<td>1 saucer inside a larger vessel</td>
<td>2 grindstones/ grindstones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amun-Kamutef barque-station at Thebes (deposit 1)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2 model saucers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortuary temple (porphic deposit)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>100 carnelian beads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple at Deir el-Bahri barque-station (deposit 5)</td>
<td>4 examples each of wood brick mould, hoe, adze, axe, knife, chisel; various gravers, mallet, surveyor’s stake</td>
<td>4 oval and circular baskets</td>
<td>4 grindstones/ grindstones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple at el-Kab (deposits 1 and 2)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>small cups of brown clay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Decorating the Temple

Partially completed areas in several temples show that the decoration of pylons, walls and columns (as with that of obelisks and other monuments) was carried out as the building work progressed, often while construction continued in close proximity to the artisans engaged in this final work. The workmen used standard techniques consisting of the sketching and incising of the outlines of representations, which were then carved in detail and painted. Both raised (bas) reliefs and sunk (en creux) reliefs were found in temples, though the expense and time-consuming nature of raised relief (in which the entire backgrounds of represented figures had to be cut out) meant that it was always utilized to a much lesser extent than the simpler sunk relief style. The quality and depth of carving in both styles varies considerably from period to period, however.

By Ramessid times the practice of usurpation of royal monuments had become so common that sunk relief – especially royal cartouches – was carved at great depth in order to discourage or make impossible the recarving of the stone by future kings. In temples such as that of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu the carving of the king’s names thus commonly extends several inches into the stone.

The various motifs used in particular temple decorations will be examined in detail later, but certain underlying principles of decoration should be noted here. Throughout the dynasties decorative programmes included the motif of the royal smiting scene and its variations, shown at the temple entrance – the origins of which may stretch back to the very beginnings of Egyptian history. Inner temple motifs showing the king before various gods also appear in almost all periods, along with texts which essentially remain the same. On the other hand, various deities were venerated in different variations and in different temples, often in varying proportions.

In the Amarna period, Akhenaten sought to reform the religious, social and political institutions of Egypt, largely on the grounds of the inefficacy of Heliopolitan theology. Akhenaten’s campaign was accompanied by a move towards monotheism, and the most prominent god of his new religion was Aten, the sun disc, that is, the sun as the source of life. A close look at the art and religious iconography of this particular period will shed some light on the manner in which the image of Aten was formed, and how it was represented as the unique source of life and creation.
texts which also often reveal little change in their essential character through the ages. On the other hand, temple decoration did remain fluid in that variation could occur within fairly fixed overall parameters.

In the New Kingdom, however, we see certain quite radical, if short-lived, developments. Temples of the Amarna period were decorated with new or modified motifs according to the requirements of Akhenaten's religious beliefs, and there was also a stress on scenes from everyday life during this period, a genre which was highly unusual within

(Left) Ramessid temple decoration, such as this example from the temple of Khonsu, Karnak, was often very deeply incised in an attempt to avoid usurpation by later rulers.

Tutankhamun holds captives by the hair, in a relief from the temple of Karnak. The military exploits of Egyptian kings were often depicted, for symbolic, protective purposes.

(Left) Ramesses III worships Hapy, god of the Nile inundation, at Medinet Habu. Such scenes of direct personal worship were usually reserved for the inner depths of the temple.
Cryptographic inscriptions
There is also a trait of increasing obsfuscation which is evident in both the representations and texts of later temples. From the 19th dynasty on, New Kingdom temples often displayed royal protocols and dedications in ornamental cryptographic writing which utilized the figures and emblems of the gods, though these inscriptions were usually accompanied by transcriptions of the cryptic text in normal hieroglyphic writing. This cryptographic tradition may actually have begun as early as the Middle Kingdom or even before in certain types of inscriptions with variant and unrecognizable temple dedications. Knowledge of the content of these inscriptions is limited to historians who have explored case studies of their cryptic nature and symbolic language.

the overall history of temple development. One very fine example of this can be seen in a reconstructed Amarna period temple wall now exhibited in the Luxor Museum of Ancient Egyptian Art. The wall, with brightly painted decoration in sunk relief, depicts numerous scenes of everyday life in quite remarkable detail which can only be understood as replacing the detailed treatments of royal martial activity normally shown in New Kingdom temple decoration.

Throughout most of the New Kingdom as well as at other times, specific examples of the king’s military and hunting exploits were represented in great detail on the outer walls and courts of royal and divine cult temples. In all periods, however, the function of these scenes is largely symbolic and apotropaic, providing visual examples of the defense of the temple against its enemies — the forces of chaos which existed beyond the sacred precinct.

(Below) Post-Amarna temple decoration displays some residual realism, as in this narrative scene of Ramesses II and the battle of Kadesh. The king, beset by enemy forces, is far more vulnerable than in pre-Amarna art.

A reconstructed wall from an Amarna period temple at Thebes (in Luxor Museum). The decoration shows scenes from everyday life that are quite uncharacteristic of earlier and later temple decoration.
Graffiti

Even after the formal temple decoration was completed, many other small inscriptions or scenes were often carved over the original decorations on the walls of the temple in the form of graffiti. Although certainly contrary to the intentions of the temple builders, these graffiti contained much of the ancient temple life as well as events affecting the later history of the gods. They were recorded in the course of time as early as the Ptolemaic Period, the Graffiti, however, can be roughly divided into two types: the temple graffiti range from crudely scratched lines to finely incised names, dates, and other symbols. One of the most interesting aspects of temple graffiti is that they are often found on the outer walls of temples, especially on the west wall, where the sun rises. This suggests that they may have been used as a form of protection or as a way of warding off evil spirits.

Even if well preserved, graffiti are not always of high quality. Writing and drawing may be difficult, and some of the most interesting examples are those that have been altered or destroyed. Nevertheless, a number of scholars have completed valuable work with this type of evidence and the recording of graffiti is now an established aspect of temple documentation and study.

Graffiti include drawings of gods' names and symbols, and other human figures as well as animals of various types, especially birds. Graffiti include both those commonly used in temple art, such as the hieroglyphic script, and those of later times written in Greek, Latin, and various other languages. The earlier texts often provide important information about the temples, their dedication and the names of the priests and officials who administered them.

Later graffiti, however, are often more numerous and more complex. They provide a wealth of information about the history of the temple, its dedication and the names of the priests and officials who administered them. They also provide a wealth of information about the history of the temple, its dedication and the names of the priests and officials who administered them.
III  WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS
The Parts of the Temple and their Meaning

"The King of Upper and Lower Egypt ..., [made a temple] ..., of fine sandstone, wide, very great, and exceedingly beautiful. Its walls are of fine gold, its pavements of silver. All its gates are worked with the pride of lands. Its pylons reach to the sky, its flagpoles to the stars."

Sothl of Amenophis III

Truly awesome structures in their developed forms, the temples of Egypt were not only magnificent homes fit for gods, they were also complex and carefully planned structures which functioned on many different levels. In the world of giant metaphors which the Egyptian temple represented, each element in the overall architectural programme played both a physical functional role and a metaphorical one in symbolizing some aspect of the temple’s underlying meaning and purpose. Thus, the rich range of symbolism that lay behind a temple's appearance and its ramifications for Egyptian religion may be grasped only after the individual areas are examined and understood.

Every temple was divided into zones of increasing sacredness. First were the temple approaches and the area within the compound’s enclosure—an area open to every Egyptian. Next came the pylon gateways and outer courts of the temple proper which were accessible to the priests and, on some occasions, to representatives of the populace. Finally there were the inner halls, which only the purified priests were allowed access to, and the sanctuary itself, which could be entered only by the king and by certain priests of the highest ranks. Beyond these areas central to every temple’s form and role, other ancillary elements were often also present—administrative chambers, magazines and stores, sacred lakes, gardens, schools, libraries and areas dedicated to numerous other uses.

Many areas had their own distinctive temple ‘furniture’—such as the great obelisks and statues which fronted entrance pylons—and each individual item of furniture had its own distinctive decoration and inscriptions so that the whole temple could be seen as an intricate mechanism of interacting parts. The monuments of the gods were in fact nothing less than models of creation and of the cosmos itself—parts within parts, worlds within worlds.

The sacred lake, Temple of Amun at Karnak.
The Temple Entrance

Temple landing quays

Because transportation was largely conducted by water in Egypt, from archaic times onwards most temples were located near the Nile or a canal connected to it. The landing quays of temples thus often served as the major, initial entrance to the religious structures even when, as at Karnak, the temple had several entrances. Many were built to accommodate boats of considerable size as they were required not only to receive boats holding large quantities of supplies but also in order to enable the docking of vessels of sufficient size for the transportation of the king or the images of the gods.

Often the quays were positioned at the end of a secondary watercourse cut back from the river in order both to get as close as possible to the temple and to provide a more stable water surface for loading and unloading the boats docked at the quay. The quays themselves also had to be built to cope with the rising and falling waters of the Nile's seasonal flood as much as possible, although all but the largest quays were usually covered by the swollen river in times of full flood.

It was at the temple quay that visiting or returning images of deities began their processional journeys to the temple proper, and it was there that they were usually greeted by crowds of common people, by high representatives of the temple, and in some cases by members of the royal family participating in the event (p. 171).

Protective sphinxes and divine images

The processional paths leading from the landing quays of temples to their main entrances — and in some cases connecting them by land routes — were delineated from quite early times by means of paving or some kind of marker. In the Old Kingdom pyramid complex the causeway which run from the so-called valley temple to the mortuary temple at the base of the pyramid was also often roofed. From at least New Kingdom times, though rarely covered, the processional entry ways to temples were frequently decorated with sculptures which served as liminal entry markers and also as protective elements. The most common image of this type was the sphinx. Sphinxes might be human-headed, ful-
filling the role of the king as guardian of the temple and its approaches, or they might take theriomorphic form as fusions of the lion with some other animal, depending on the nature of the god with whose temple they were associated. Ram-headed sphinxes thus lined the processional way leading to the temple of the god Amun at Karnak, and elsewhere there were hawk-headed sphinxes for the god Re. A small image of the king was often placed between the outstretched paws of the recumbent animal and in such cases the sphinx was doubtless intended to represent an image of the god himself rather than the king, though the essentially protective function of the image remains the same. The use of fully theriomorphic types of sphinxes parallels the way in which statues of the gods themselves were sometimes erected along processional ways, for instance the many famous statues of the seated goddess Sekhmet which were placed along the processional way linking the precinct of Mut with the temple of Amun at Karnak.

In some instances such pathways were marked by large numbers of sphinxes or divine statues, and the amount of work involved in their production must have been considerable. The processional avenue which joins Karnak and Luxor temples, for example, is approximately 2 km (1.2 miles) in length and was furnished with literally hundreds of sphinxes combining the body of a lion with the head of Nectanebo I (380–363 BC). This late ruler rebuilt the line of sphinxes in the 4th century BC to replace the ruined New Kingdom examples which were erected along at least part of the avenue from as early as the time of Hatshepsut.
impressive is without doubt that of Senwosret I, which was reconstructed from the ninth pylon of the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak.

The enclosure walls

The temple domain proper was entered through the large enclosure walls which surrounded the core area of the god’s estate. The function of these walls was twofold. Primarily, their role was one of containment in that they delineated the god’s estate and sealed it from surrounding habitation or open areas. But the enclosure walls were also protective in that they were usually designed to protect the temple in times of civil strife or invasion.

These enclosure walls were invariably built of sun-dried mud-brick and constructed in sections which were sometimes built over a simple framework of wooden beams and reed mats. Such outer walls are particularly common from New Kingdom times, and at the beginning of that period a new word — sehty — was coined for this type of massive enclosure wall placed around both towns and temples. Often they were thickened or even channelled to prevent infiltration. The lateral entrance, or gateways, were sometimes elaborated with statues of the god in question or Papyrus reeds as gateposts. Often the gateposts were replaced by Realityки. These enclosure walls were usually built with great care and with a fine sense of proportion. Often they appear as if they were built as a single unit, with the top of the wall being slightly rounded like a domed circle or a swaying arch. These walls were usually built in four courses, with courses that are squared in proportion to the wall.

Obelisk

The obelisk is much taller than the pyramids. It is also an exact replica of the original ancient Egyptian obelisk. It was made of red granite and stood about 116 m (448 ft) tall when complete. The Obelisk of Hatshepsut is 29.66 m (97.10 ft) high and weighs some 350 tons.

(Opposite) The standing obelisks of Hatshepsut (at the rear) and Tutmosis I in the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak. Each was originally one of a pair erected near what became the temple’s core. The obelisk of Hatshepsut is 29.56 m (97.10 ft) high and weighs some 350 tons.
temples. Many of the temple walls were built to thicknesses of up to 10 m (c. 30 ft) or more to prevent their destruction, and were often crenelated with rounded 'battlements' to enhance their protective role. Occasionally, bastions or fortified gateways were also added as we find recorded in Papyrus Harris I: 'I surrounded the temple of Inhur with an enclosure-wall ... with turrets, fortified gates and bastions on its every side' – though in reality, the number of entrances piercing the outer wall was usually kept to a minimum for defensive reasons.

There was also a symbolic element to these walls as the brick enclosure walls of temples were often built with alternating concave and convex sections apparently representing the waters of the mythical primeval ocean. It has been suggested, however, that this wave-like pattern had the purely practical purpose of preventing cracking in the walls due to shrinkage of the bricks when drying or the uneven swelling of the ground when flooded, etc, but none of these theories fits the evidence of the surviving walls which were usually built in this fashion only around temple precincts, or around areas apparently controlled by temples.

In the most complex type of undulating design the walls were not only built with alternating concave and convex sections along the length of the wall, but also in such patterns across their width. Often more simplified patterns were utilized, however, and in some enclosure walls undulating courses of brickwork were simply built in the upper sections of the walls above regular horizontally laid courses (as at Edfu), or above regular stone foundation courses (as at Philae).

**Obelisks**

The obelisk was one of Egypt's most ancient symbolic architectural forms. At first perhaps only an irregularly shaped upright sacred stone, in its developed form it consisted of an elongated tapering four-sided shaft, polished, inscribed and surmounted by a sharply pointed pyramidion.

Dating back to the earliest periods, the obelisk seems to have originated, or at least to have become established, in the sun cult of Heliopolis and spread from there around Egypt. Especially common in New Kingdom times, obelisks were often erected in pairs before the temple entrance proper (though at times single obelisks were placed on the central axis of some temples) and only came to be enclosed within the temple form as the precincts grew and new pylons were added. As major gifts to the gods, obelisks were important monuments commemorating royal jubilees, victories or other notable events and are frequently depicted on the walls of the temples in which they were erected to record their donor's piety.

In their fully developed form, obelisks were thus made as ornately inscribed objects, often rising
The Prerogative of Pharaohs: Hatshepsut’s Donatation of Obelisks to Amun

An inscribed block of Hatshepsut celebrating her donation of two obelisks ‘for her father Amun’ at Karnak.

Temple obelisks were not commissioned or erected by the temple administrations but by the king himself in his capacity as son of the god and high priest of the cult. Queen-King Hatshepsut donated four obelisks to the god Amun at Karnak.

A decorated block (above) removed from the third pylon at Karnak late last century records the donation of these obelisks. The block was originally part of a small sanctuary named ‘The august shrine and favourite place of Amun’, and shows the queen as a male, with ceremonial beard and full kingly regalia, standing before the god Amun who pronounces blessings upon her for the gift.

On the block Hatshepsut is shown on the left wearing the double crown of kingship, but in other ways her appearance and attributes match those of Amun.

The inscription reads:

‘The king himself [Hatshepsut] erected two great obelisks to her [note change of gender] father Amun-Re, before the chief columned hall, made with much electrum. Their [the obelisks’] heads pierce the sky and illuminate the two lands like the sun disc.’

Amun is depicted on the right of the block wearing the sluity or double-feather crown associated with the god and carries the was sceptre and ankh sign: symbols of power and life. Here the inscription reads:

‘Words spoken by Amun lord of the thrones of the two lands [to] the daughter of [his] body, Hatshepsut, [I] gave to you kingship [of] the two lands [with] millions of years upon the throne [of] Horus, in stability like Re.’

The short inscriptions shown on the faces of the two engraved obelisks summarize the intent of the texts on the actual monuments – dedicating them to ‘The beloved Amun-Re, king of the gods and lord of heaven.’

A drawing of a relief showing the erection of obelisks by Ptolemy XII. Although obviously symbolic, ropes were probably used.

The probable method for erecting obelisks using a ramp and a sand-filled ditch. Ropes would have been used to control the movement of the stone.

scores of feet above the sacred enclosures, their gilded pyramids being the first and last points of the temple to catch the rays of the rising and setting sun. Monolithic in nature, they frequently weighed many hundreds of tons and represent some of the ancient Egyptians’ greatest achievements of stone cutting and handling. Many were made from the red granite quarried at Aswan where, at over a thousand tons, the great Unfinished Obelisk – the largest ever attempted – still lies.

Despite the fact that dozens of obelisks were erected in the course of Egyptian history, the raising of these monolithic blocks must have presented a challenge for the Egyptians. The exact method used is not known and different ones may have been preferred at different times. The extant representational evidence only shows obelisks being transported in their upright state, though a
The 12 Largest Standing Obelisks

Of the hundreds of obelisks erected by the Egyptians, only four or so remain standing in Egypt and some 21 stand outside Egypt in the locations to which they were subsequently transported. The following are the largest obelisks currently standing, with their location.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>King</th>
<th>Present Location</th>
<th>Height m/ft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuthmosis III</td>
<td>Rome, Piazza S. Giovanni</td>
<td>32.18 m / 105 ft 6 in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatshepsut</td>
<td>Karnak, Great Temple of Amun</td>
<td>29.56 m / 97 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuthmosis III</td>
<td>Istanbul, Atmeidan</td>
<td>28.95 m* / 95 ft*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown**</td>
<td>Rome, Piazza S. Pietro</td>
<td>25.80 m / 82 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsesses II</td>
<td>Luxor Temple</td>
<td>22.20 m / 76 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesostris I-Ramesess II</td>
<td>Rome, Piazza del Popolo</td>
<td>22.55 m / 74 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsesses II</td>
<td>Paris, Place de la Concorde</td>
<td>21.79 m / 71 ft 6 in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psammetichus II</td>
<td>Rome, Monte Citorio</td>
<td>21.21 m / 69 ft 6 in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuthmosis III</td>
<td>New York, Central Park</td>
<td>20.88 m / 68 ft 6 in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuthmosis III</td>
<td>London, Thames Embankment</td>
<td>20.41 m / 67 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senusret I</td>
<td>Heliopolis, Makel el-Masalata</td>
<td>19.30 m / 64 ft</td>
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* Estimated original height.
** May have been constructed by a Roman ruler of Egypt.

The eastern side of the obelisk of Ramsesses II at Luxor.

The so-called Colossi of Memnon are great statues carved from single blocks of stone depicting Amenophis III. They stood at the entrance to the king's mortuary temple in western Thebes and are now virtually all that remains of this great monument.

Relief depiction of the ritual or symbolic erection of obelisks by means of ropes exists from the time of Ptolemy XII. Almost certainly obelisks were drageed up artificial ramps and then lowered in some manner, base first, on to their socles. To prevent breakage some method of arresting or controlling the movement of the obelisk must have been employed, perhaps by lowering it into a funnel-shaped area filled with sand. A section of the Papyrus Anastasi I which deals with the erection of a royal monument seems to describe the removal of sand from this kind of erection 'chamber'.

Many of Egypt's obelisks were later removed to other locations (often with great difficulty, even much later in history). The Assyrian king Ashurbanipal removed two to Nineveh, and Roman emperors took a number to Rome and Constantinople. As late as the 19th century modern western states continued this trend, so that there now remain only four or five standing obelisks in Egypt itself, most famous being those of Luxor and Karnak temples, with that of Hatshepsut at Karnak now the largest remaining in its native land.

Colossi

From as early as Old Kingdom times and even before, great stone images of kings were carved from monolithic blocks of limestone, sandstone, quartzite and granite for erection in temples and shrines. These colossi functioned on several levels. Stationed along the temple approaches and in major processional areas they certainly acted in a protective role, but they also showed the inseparable relationship of the king with the gods at a level close to that of the divine. As manifestations of the spirits of the pharaohs they represented, they were usually accessible to the people or in areas which were at least open on special occasions. Colossi could be given individual names such as 'Amenophis Sun of Rulers' or 'Ramesess-Montu in the Two Lands' and worshipped directly by the people, acting as intercessors with the gods or as gods in their own right.

The largest colossi made in Egypt were produced during the New Kingdom reigns of Amenophis III and Ramsesses II and were of truly gargantuan proportions. The famous 'Colossi of Memnon' erected by Amenophis outside his mortuary temple at Thebes (p. 188) and the gigantic ruined statue of...
Ramesses II in that king’s Theban mortuary temple (p. 184) are among the largest objects ever cut from single blocks of stone.

Ramesses II was especially enamoured of these colossal figures and had more, and larger, statues carved than any pharaoh before or after him. Although it is unknown exactly how many colossi were made for this prolific builder, fragments of his giant monuments are uncovered in the cultivation or the desert sands so frequently that Egyptian villagers often refer to any colossus as a ‘Ramesses’. Certainly, dozens of his colossi were set up in temples throughout Egypt, and while many smaller statues of previous rulers were also usurped and reused by this king, most of his larger colossi appear to have been made directly at Ramesses’ behest. It is recorded that one day Ramesses was walking on the hill known to the Egyptians as the ‘Red Mountain’ where he found a great block of quartzite ‘the equal of which had never been found’. This block of red stone (a colour symbolic of solar divinity) stone was said to be taller than an obelisk and from it Ramesses immediately ordered that ‘a great statue of Ramesses the god’ should be made. The work on this single statue is said to have taken over a year to complete.

The skill involved in the construction of these behemoths was impressive. While the bodies of many free-standing colossi were carved from one block, with the statue body joined to the base at the feet, some—such as the colossus of Amenophis III erected to the south of Karnak Temple—were carved completely free so that they actually stood on the soles of their feet.

It might be expected that colossal statues would have been quarried and transported in recumbent position, and raised, like obelisks, on their bases once at their destinations. The well-known Middle Kingdom relief of Djehutihotep at Deir el-Bersha, however, depicts the transportation of a huge seated colossal in an upright position, and this suggests that it was a common practice to have been artistic licence. Perhaps for seated statues an upright position caused less drag. Nevertheless, it is generally considered that the bodies of some statues (such as those on the southern side of the bases of the colossi of Memnon) show that ejection in a method similar to that used for obelisks was almost certainly employed at least in some cases.

The pylons were exceptionally large. Pylon gates are the most distinctive architectural feature of these ancient religious structures. This type of pylon seems to have developed in Old Kingdom pyramid temples but may first have been regularly incorporated into temple design in the Middle Kingdom, though little archaeological evidence of these early mud-brick pylons remains.

Many later pylons were built with a casing of massive stones around an inner core of smaller, irregular and reused stones. Structures built by previous kings would often be used for this kind of filler, especially if the king had become discredited or if the location of the earlier structure interfered with planned expansions. Ironically, a number of temple structures consigned to oblivion in this manner were in fact protected from damage. The so-called White Chapel at Karnak is one of the most famous examples of this, along with the many decorated talatat blocks from Akhenaten’s Aten temple at east Karnak which were used within the ninth pylon of the Great Temple of Amun when that structure was erected (p. 243). Sometimes reused stone was even employed for the outer casing of pylons, as is the case with the first great pylon that fronts the Amun temple. In later periods, pylons were often simply constructed of some combination of brick and stone. The Ptolemaic pylon built before the Small Temple at Medinet Habu was constructed in this way, for example, although it was given a stone façade on its outer face and plastered over on its inner side.

The massive structure of the completed pylons clearly served a defensive and apotropaic function, not only physically defending the gateway from intruders, but also symbolically standing as a bastion repelling the inimical forces of chaos and evil in the outer world. The pylon’s usual Egyptian name, Behenuet, appears with certainty only in the 18th dynasty and seems to be derived from a verbal form meaning ‘to be vigilant’ relating to the watchtower-like nature of such structures.

Although we are unsure of the decoration on temple pylons earlier times, in the developed temple of the New Kingdom and later periods the most common decorative motif is that of the king smiting enemies. This conventional motif has many variations, but in most the standing figure of the king raises a club or a short kitev sword above his enemies in the traditional ‘smiting scene’ known from the earliest dynasties. The very antiquity of this motif suggests that it may well have appeared on cult temples before the New Kingdom, though it is also possible that this particular use coincided with Egypt’s period of greatest military expansion and empire. Symbolically, as will be seen, it is also axiomatic that the pylon mimicked the shape of the abib or horizon horus, or at least was viewed as such, for it was here that the sun rose on the physical horizon between the outer world and the hidden, sacred landscape of the temple.

The flagpoles set into the face of the temple pylon mimicked the poles upon which fetishes and flags were set on the origin for the decorative form. Although representing not enemies of the king’s realm or more.

The gods were represented in them, installed in the temple, and that they were not the same, though the goddesses were directly connected to the god by their flaying of the sails of the royal boat and by scenes of the god and queen of the temple. Statues of the father and mother of the temple also show the god in the boat of Min by river.
were set in the earliest shrines and are doubtless the origin for the hieroglyphic sign used as a determinative for ‘god’ in the ancient Egyptian language [1]. Although none of these poles have survived, the representational evidence we have suggests that many of them may have reached heights of 60 m (200 ft) or more and weighed in excess of 5 tons.

The great size of these flagpoles would have presented particular problems of erection and installation in the pylon niches, and it seems likely that they were put up using ropes and scaffolding, though this aspect of their installation is never directly depicted. Dieter Arnold has pointed out that representations and models of pharomic sailing boats suggest that the Egyptians had developed rope-pull techniques for the hoisting of sails and masts which may well have been applied to the erection of flagpoles and a scene on the south side of the first pylon of Luxor Temple does indeed show the raising of a ceremonial pole for the god Min by means of ropes.
The Outer Courts

Behind the entrance pylon of the developed or "standard plan" Egyptian temple there was usually an open peristyle court, partially or wholly surrounded by a colonnade. Several names were given by the Egyptians to this part of the temple, depending on its architectural style and the kind of columns it contained -- as the columns were central both to the structure and symbolic function of the outer areas of a temple (p. 76). The major practical function of the temple's outer court, however, was transitional since the court frequently served as a zone of interface between the inner, sanctified areas of the god's domain and the outer, more public areas.

Between gods and mortals
Although contained within the temple proper, the outer court was often accessible to the common people, at least in part or on special occasions, as can be seen from the Ptolemaic name for the outer court, "the court of the multitude" and by the large "rebit" hieroglyphs representing the people of Egypt which were often inscribed on the walls or columns of the court. These hieroglyphs indicated to those who were allowed into the court where they should stand while processions were enacted (p. 99).

Specially designated areas for 'making supplication and the hearing of petitions' were sometimes located within temple courts as well as on the temple's perimeters, and the populace doubtless was able to meet priests on personal matters or temple business and to deliver offerings in the open courts of many temples. A clear example of public presence is also seen in the statues which were set up in these areas.

Temple statuary
While not as obvious as the obelisks and colossi which often stood before a temple's pylon, the most important items of temple furniture found in the outer courts were the many royal and private statues placed there from Middle Kingdom times. The function of the royal statues was for the most part not essentially different from examples placed along the processional ways or before the pylon, but statues of non-royal individuals fulfilled several functions. In funerary contexts statues acted as potential 'hosts' in which the soul/ka could reside after death as a place of rest. At this time the temple was itself a memorial to the king and hence the temple area was covered by an implicit imperative that the god was to be served while he resided there. In Middle Kingdom temples, as in later periods, the king's statue was always in the temple area and the offering place was close by. In Middle Kingdom temples, a large number of statues were found in niches in the outer courts."

Occasionally -- as with temples such as Deir el-Bahri or Luxor -- a block statue, the "son of Heaven", was placed in the temple area and inscribed to the god, especially Amun or Amun-Ra. This was not a god's statue, but a king dressed as a god and probably announced by his name a new formula for the god. In this way, the king performed a ritual act. In addition, the king's name was often added to cult statues of the gods, with a formula meaning "may he who is in his possession be blessed with life."
as a physical alternative to the body itself, but temple statues were probably not intended to share this role. Temple statues certainly served as a memorial to the deceased individuals they portrayed and allowed their owners to be perpetually present in the sacred area—they were thus not only constantly in the close presence of the gods, but also might be noticed by the pious living who were often implored in the statues' inscriptions to pronounce the name of the deceased and to recite the offering formula on his or her behalf. Even when the statues stood unnoticed in the temple courts it is possible that they were believed to have participated magically in the 'reversion of offerings' by which the priests and temple staff received the sustenance of offerings once they had been presented to the gods. In Middle Kingdom times the statues were almost always of men—thus, for example, the only Middle Kingdom woman represented in the Karnak cachette was the mother of the vizier Ankhau of the 13th dynasty—though with the 'mature formal' temples of the New Kingdom and beyond, temple statues of women became more common.

Occasionally the statues of elevated individuals—as with royal statues—acted also as intermediaries between the people and the gods. A famous block statue of the 18th-dynasty sage Amenophis son of Hapu from Thebes confidently asserts in its inscription: 'people of Karnak who wish to see Amun: come to me and I will transmit your petitions'. But unlike the intermediary function of royal statues, this service was offered in return for pronouncing the name and reciting the offering formula on behalf of the son of Hapu, so that his statue and others like it must be seen to have combined some of the functions of royal and private temple statuary.

Rather than being made to attract or seize attention, private temple statues were usually intended to be unobtrusive. The forms in which they were often carved—the 'block statue' showing the individual squatting on the ground or the kneeling figure presenting an offering before a deity—had low centres of gravity and were the most stable for positioning in the sometimes crowded courts, as well as symbolizing in their poses the humble and patient attendance of the individual before the gods.

(Above left) A seated statue of an 18th-dynasty ruler in the Great Temple of Amun, Karnak.

(Above) The Courtyard of the Cachette at Karnak, where hundreds of stone statues were found in 1903.

A statue of Amenophis son of Hapu, as a seated scribe, an example of a statue of a non-royal person who held elevated statuses.
The Luxor Temple Cachette

On 22 January, 1989, while working on the western side of Amenophis III’s colonnaded solar court in Luxor Temple, archaeologists and workers of the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation discovered a deep pit containing a remarkable hoard of statuary now known as the ‘Luxor Temple Cachette’. The deposit seems to have been made in the early 4th century AD to hold unwanted statuary during the installation of the cult of the deified Roman emperor which was established in Luxor Temple at that time.

A quartzite statue of Amenophis III from the Luxor Cachette which contained many fine items of temple statuary.

Once opened, the pit was found to contain a wide range of statues ranging in date from the mid-18th dynasty to the Ptolemaic Period. About half of the objects proved to be well preserved, now cleaned and repaired where necessary, many are regarded as among the finest artifacts to have been found in Egypt.

Some of the statues are of individual figures representing gods, goddesses, queens and kings, and kingly as gods, while others are group statues – dyads and triads of divine and royal groups. Perhaps the most amazing single statue is the larger-than-life-sized, almost perfectly preserved 'statue of a statue' of Amenophis III which depicts a sledge-borne image of the king carved from a striking purple-red gold quartzite. This and several others of the finest sculptures from the hoard are now on display in the Luxor Museum.

The hypostyle

Positioned on the long sides of the hypostyle hall is the central pylon of the temple’s entrance. Although smaller in size, the central pylon has a prominent doorway. The second order of the temple’s exterior is therefore the private chamber, the space that was achieved by doors opening into the hypostyle hall.

In the Old Kingdom, the maximum width of a hypostyle hall was equal to the maximum length of the temple. The sandstone columns and beams were exploited to maximum effect by the architects, who often made them appear to reach the ceiling (in) or to basically support the ceiling (out). The construction was made of large stone columns supporting the ceiling.

The crowning of the hypostyle hall is the realm of the hypostyle hall columns – a device at the heart of the cult of the deified king.
The Inner Halls and Sanctuaries

(Left) The inner halls of the temple of Hathor at Dendera. Beyond the main hypostyle hall lie subsidiary halls used in the practice of the cult and the sanctuaries of the goddess and those deities associated with her.

Decorated columns within the hypostyle hall of the temple of Khnum at Edfu. The columns feature texts giving particularly full descriptions of events of the sacred year at this temple.

columns of the hypostyle hall can thus be seen as types of these cosmic pillars, so that statements such as that made by Amenophis III regarding the temple of Karnak, "Its pillars reach heaven like the four pillars of heaven", contain a symbolic truth beyond the obvious hyperbole.

The hypostyle hall

Positioned directly beyond the temple's open court, the hypostyle hall was usually broader than it was deep and was filled with columns except along the central processional way which followed the temple's main axis towards the inner shrine. Although it is sometimes said that the hypostyle's dense forest of columns acted as a screen to block the view from the semi-public courtyard into the inner shrine, the open processional way along the temple's axis meant that this could not be so, and the privacy of the inner sacred areas of the temples was achieved instead by increasing darkness and by doors. In reality, the true functions of the hypostyle were more practical and also symbolic.

In the earlier stone-built structures of the Old Kingdom, chambers and passages rarely had a width of more than 3 m (9 ft 10 in) as this was about the maximum span that could be trusted with limestone architraves and roofing slabs. Once the sandstone quarries of Gebel el-Silsila began to be exploited and large quantities of this stone were made available, the use of architraves of 8 m (26 ft 3 in) or so became possible. Nevertheless, Egyptian architecture was usually conservative and the spans employed in the basic post-and-lintel construction were never great, so that large numbers of columns were needed to support the roofs of hypostyle halls.

The crowded halls of columns also held symbolic meanings. In Egyptian mythology the celestial realm of the sky was supported above the earth on columns — which are often shown as a framing device at the sides of temple representations. The
The columns of the hypostyle could also represent the marshland vegetation which sprang up around the prirneval mound of creation – symbolized by the temple’s inner shrine. Accordingly they were often decorated to reflect this symbolism; and the single papyrus stem column, while hardly a copy of a realistic building material, was particularly appropriate in this regard. The large variety of column types employed in hypostyle architecture was also appropriate to the metaphor of original creation; and despite the often massive size of the columns, the larger temples might contain great numbers of them in their hypostyle halls. No fewer than 134 columns – each some 24 m (79 ft) high – were erected in the great hypostyle hall of Karnak Temple alone.

Types of columns and pillars

Although some columns and pillars were made from large monolithic blocks of stone (especially in the earlier periods), most were built up in sections which were then shaped and smoothed from the top down (p. 43), leaving a finely finished surface which – especially when painted – looked like a single pillar of stone.

In most cases the shafts of Egyptian columns were copies in stone of supports made from plants — either trunks or bundles of stems of smaller diameter such as those of the papyrus plant. The shapes of column capitals were likewise derived from plant motifs, and the shafts and capitals were usually connected by five horizontal ties representing the lashings which held together the bundle of stems of which the earliest columns were composed. Above the shaft and capital a low abacus usually connected the column to the architraves placed upon it.

There was a great variety in column design and as many as 30 differing forms can be distinguished in temples of different periods. Generally, the exact form of a column was dictated by its location in the temple, with ‘bud’-like capitals being found in the outer courts and away from the central axis of the inner temple and ‘open’ capital type columns being found in the temple’s central areas. This practice was not always followed, however, and later temples especially may show great variation in the placement and style of their columnar forms. In the temples of the Graeco-Roman period the columns are especially varied, yet even there most can be seen to be derivative of the major types (see below).

- **Palmiform** columns did not represent the palm tree itself but eight palm fronds lashed to a pole. This was one of the earliest column types used in Egyptian temple architecture, and the granite columns in the 5th-dynasty pyramid temple of Unas were palmiform. Although this type was not commonly used in succeeding periods, it does appear in certain locations. The majority of the columns in the temple of Taharqa at Kawa in Upper Nubia were of this type, and the palmiform column is also found in temples of the Graeco-Roman Period.

- **Lotiform** columns usually have ribbed shafts to represent the plant’s stems with a capital representing the closed bud or open lotus flower. Although open lotus capitals are evident in a number of ancient representations, few actual examples have been found and they seem to have been more commonly employed in domestic architecture. The simpler lotus-bud form saw widespread use in Old and Middle Kingdom temples and, despite a lessening of its popularity in New Kingdom times, saw use again in the temples of the Graeco-Roman Period.

- **Papyrus** columns with circular or ribbed shafts can represent singular or multi-stem papyrus plants. The single-stem form is first found in the Step Pyramid enclosure at Saqqara, though these examples are not free-standing but engaged. The single-stem form seems to have been used sporadically from this time on, and saw widespread use in New Kingdom temples with both wide bell-shaped capitals representing the opened umbrella of the plant and a simpler closed bud capital style. The multi-stem or bundle form

A great variety of different types of column capitals were used in ancient Egypt, sometimes within the same area, as seen here in the temple of Horus-Sobek at Koms Ombo.

**Columns and Pillars**

- **Fluted** columns of stone representing bundled reeds or plant stems first appear in the Step Pyramid enclosure of Djoser. Though they were no longer popular in Egypt by New Kingdom times, fluted columns continued to be used in temples in Nubia. In Egypt proper the fluted form was sometimes replaced by a somewhat similar version – the polygonal column shaft.
With the exception of some full-length pillars which display the image of the god Bes, the so-called Besiform or Beside columns are actually something of a misnomer. Where the image of the god Bes is placed on the abaci above the capitals of columns, such as those of the Roman birth house at Dendera, these images are technically part of the external temple decoration and not intrinsic to the basic column types above which they are placed.

Doors

As one passes deeper into the heart of an Egyptian temple it is necessary to move through doorways which both protected the sacred inner areas and also acted as liminal points — symbolic thresholds which were necessary elements in the enactment of ritual processes.

The door-leaves (‘way’) which turned on pivots set into sockets in the threshold and lintel of the doorway (‘seba’) were usually made of wood, and those of temples were frequently plated with metal and decorated with texts and inscriptions like their adjacent walls. While it is possible that some temple door-leaves were made entirely from cast metal, Egyptian descriptions of doors of ‘metal’ seem

first appears in the 5th dynasty and also became popular in the New Kingdom. Earlier examples from the 18th dynasty are often finely detailed, whereas from the 19th dynasty they tended to become more stylized. In the New Kingdom the shafts of most papyrus columns taper upwards from bases decorated with triangular patterns representing stylized stem sheaths.

- Coniferous columns - fluted shafts bearing capitals apparently mimicking branches of conifer trees — appear in the Step Pyramid enclosure of Djoser but were apparently a short-lived form not found in later temples.

- Tent-pole-type columns were perhaps rarely used in stone. The wooden prototypes of this type of columns were used to support light structures such as tents, shrines, kiosks or ships’ cabins. While the design may possibly have been copied in brick architecture from very early times, the only surviving examples of the tent pole column in stone are in the Festival Temple of Turinmes III at Karnak, though other columns of this type seem to be mentioned in texts.

- Companion form or floral columns or pillars were of different types, having circular, ribbed or square shafts, but all with a capital in the form of an open flower. The Hall of Annals of Turinmes III at Karnak contains two famous companion form pillars, one with the head of an Egyptian heratic plant (the lotus) positioned symbolically on the northern and southern sides of the hall. Such columns were unusual, though stylized companion form columns appear more frequently in temples of the Greek-Roman Period.

- Composite columns were common in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. The style probably derived from the canopic form column with capital decoration including floral designs derived from numerous real or invented plant forms, though they are often stylized and have lost many indications of their original floral motifs.

Other column and pillar types represented deities or their attributes:

- Osride pillars originated in the Middle Kingdom and consisted of engaged statues of the king in the form of the god Osiris, usually on the pillars’ front surfaces.

- Hathoric columns also originated in the Middle Kingdom and usually consisted of a shaft surmounted by a capital bearing the features of the cow-headed goddess. This type of column can be seen, for example, in the temple of Neferetari at Abu Simbel, though the hypostyle hall of the Ptolemaic temple at Dendera has the most famous examples in its twenty-four Hathoric columns surrounded on all four sides by the head of the goddess. Sistrum columns are also associated with Hathor, but represent in their shafts and capitals the handles and rattles of the sistrum — the principal attribute of the goddess.

(Above) An image of the king at the sides of doors within many temples symbolically cleanses all who enter.

(Above) Channels in the blackness of the first pylon of the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu held the massive doors which sealed the entrance.
most likely to refer to plated doors, and actual cast metal was most probably used only in small doors such as those of shrines. Copper is the material most commonly specified in such cases, though doors are also described as being covered in bronze, electrum and gold.

Like other features of temple architecture doors were given names, such as that at Karnak Temple which was made by Tuthmosis III. [The doorway] "Menkhpeperu, Amun great of strength, whom-the-people-praise," its great door-leaf of cedar of Lebanon worked with bronze, the Great name upon it in electrum." As noted above, doors also usually had symbolic significance. Like gateways, they represented thresholds as well as barriers and could signify transition in addition to protection. As important thresholds of other worlds or states, doors are commonly shown in representations of the shrines of gods, and the ritual act of opening these doors was symbolic of the opening of the 'doors' of heaven itself. The false doors found in many temples (p. 151) held this same significance as a threshold to the divine.

**Subsidiary chambers, storerooms and crypts**

Ranged around the central area of the temple's shrine were chambers where the statues of visiting deities would be placed—sometimes with connected suites of rooms for the visitor's use; storerooms for cultic equipment such as the clothing for the god's image, incense, etc; vesting chambers where the priests would prepare themselves for special ceremonies; and other rooms having to do with the daily course of temple ritual.

Many temples also had hidden crypts built into their walls and beneath their floors, especially in the inner part of the temple, and examples are known in temples ranging from the 18th dynasty to the Graeco-Roman Period. Although these crypts are sometimes fancifully believed to have been employed for the enactment of secret rites, the small size or difficulty of access of many of them indicate that they were mainly used for the giving of oracles by hidden priests, as secret storerooms for the safekeeping of valuable items, or had some symbolic purpose.

Typical examples of hidden crypts may be found in the small temple of the hippopotamus goddess Opet (p. 162) in the Karnak Temple complex. Despite its relatively small size, this structure has numerous crypts hidden within its walls as well as larger ones built beneath ground level which served as a symbolic 'tomb' for the god Amun (here associated with Osiris) and as repositories for the objects and materials necessary for the Festival of the 'Resurrection' of the god.

**Stairs and roof areas**

The roof areas of many gods' houses were incorporated into the overall temple structure through both architectural design and the enactment of ritual. In addition to the stairways built within pylon towers, most temples had stairways giving access to the roofs of the hypostyle and inner halls and chambers, and these roof areas were used not only for matters of practical building maintenance but also in the rituals of various temples. This is particularly well documented at Dendera, where we know that as part of the New Year's festival the image of Hathor was taken up one of the temple's staircases (which was itself decorated with figures of the king and the gods participating in this very procession) to the roof, where there was a special chapel in which the goddess awaited the year's first sunrise. In the same way at Edfu a statue of the falcon-god Horus was carried in its portable shrine, accompanied by ancestor gods—also depicted on the walls of the stairwell—to the roof of the temple for the same khenen-aten or 'uniting with the sun'. Many other temple processions involved the transfer of the god's image (often from subterranean crypts) up through the temple to the roof, and thus the effective space of the temple was expanded both downwards and upwards in an obvious symbolism embracing the god's activity in the underworld and heavens as well as on earth.

At the practical level, the roofs of many temples had drainage systems to vent rainwater, and the output was directed away from the temple area. The roofs of the hypostyle hall and the pylon towers, particularly, were fitted with a system of arches and conduits which drained the rainwater to the sides of the temple.
The barque chapel

The innermost parts of the Egyptian temple are often confusingly labelled sanctuaries, chapels, shrines, or other terms. In the present book the room which was the dwelling of the god is referred to as the sanctuary, with the small, often portable structure which held the god’s image within that room being referred to as the shrine. One of the rooms often directly preceding the sanctuary was that in which the god’s portable barque was housed: the ‘barque chapel’.

The offering hall and altars

Altars were sometimes placed in the room preceding the sanctuary, and in such cases this room was used as an offering hall where the sacrifices to the god were made. In other cases, a small altar was placed in the inner sanctuary itself. Altars could take many forms, though the most common varieties were square offering blocks carved and decorated on their sides, or flat slabs resting on cylindrical bases.

In the more extensive temples, larger altars were often positioned in other courts and halls; and several types may be found in these areas, ranging from relatively low, table-like altars to taller, flat-topped altars and those of possible Syrian origin with raised corners. These larger altars sometimes had steps leading to their tops and could be significant structures of quite considerable size.