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*Atti*



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## Recent Discoveries at Giza Plateau

Two major discoveries found at Giza during 1990-1991.

### *I - The Causeway and the Valley Temple of Khufu*

The Egyptian Government founded a project to build a sewage system for the village of Nazlet al-Samman. During the construction of the system, the inspectorate of Antiquities at Giza was able to determine the route of the causeway and the location of the Valley Temple of Khufu.

At six points in the streets of the village, excavations revealed elements of monumental limestone architecture in line with the extended direction of the causeway of Khufu's Pyramid. The major discovery about the causeway is that at the point of the excavation at Abdel Hamid el-Wastani street, it bends at an angle of 32 degrees to the north of the original direction and continues from here a further 125 m. to the location of the Valley Temple. The overall length of the causeway from the Valley Temple to the Funerary Temple is 825 m.

The black-green basalt pavement was discovered in March 1990 during the course of excavating a sewage trench. The levels of the blocks ranged between 14.20 m. and 14.00 m. above sea level and 4.50 m. below the present ground level in the area.

The basalt pavement was neither continuous nor complete. The removal of blocks in antiquity had reduced the original layout. Some of the apparent gaps in the pavement may represent the position of dividing walls, either destroyed or also removed.

The overlying strata of pure Nile (alluvial) silt sealed the basalt blocks in their current condition and extended up to the foundation of the present-day Mansouriyya Street. There were no cultural inclusions noted in this material, only very rare flakes of limestone (natural) and no indication of any pits or trenches cut through the silt to extract blocks. It is safe therefore to assume an ancient destruction.

At the south edge of the basalt blocks, archaeological excavation revealed part of a mudbrick wall possibly as much as 8.0 m. wide (although its south side is not clearly defined). North of this wall, the basalt blocks extend 56.0 m. in the trench so far excavated. Five additional test trenches dug on the west side of the original trench gave further valuable details about the configuration of the basalt blocks.

The monumental building discovered is believed to be the valley temple of

Khufu. Now for the first time, the map of the Giza Plateau is completed.

## *II - The Tombs of the Pyramid Builders*

A new cemetery has been found southwest of the Great Sphinx and south of the limestone wall called "Heit el-Ghorab".

Eleven large tombs were found there and about 58 small tombs. The tombs were built of mudbrick, limestone, granite and basalt.

An example of these tombs is a tomb built of mudbrick and pieces of granite. It has a vaulted ceiling. The interior was faced with plaster and bears two false-doors. On door, the name of the deceased "Shepses-Ptah" is inscribed in hieroglyphs. In front of the inscribed false-door, an open niche was located. Burial shafts were found behind the tomb with broken pottery stored in them.

Inscribed offering tables unearthed have the titles of a lady who was a priestess of Hathor. Other offering vessels containing oxen bones were found.

A painted stela discovered above the false-door shows the deceased sitting with his wife around an offering table. One of the overseers (Rais) of the workers has first the title "Inspector of the Tomb Makers" and is elsewhere promoted to the title "Director of the Tomb Workers".

Some of the most interesting discoveries in this cemetery are three statues of the deceased, his wife and a third beautiful statue of a servant lady, grinding colour pigments. Some of the tombs have their entrances on the east side with an open court and a false-door located west of the open court. Some tombs were for family burials and are either rectangular or square. We found that each large tomb had a group of small shafts located either in front or beside it. All the pottery found in this cemetery dates to the Old Kingdom. The pottery vessels consist of beer jars, models, Maydoun bowls, moulds for baking plates, Pth moulds, plates, and daily life wares.

The recently discovered cemetery is to be identified as the cemetery of the pyramid builders of the Giza Plateau.

\* Il dott. Hawass, impegnato in campagne di scavo, non ha potuto inviare il testo definitivo per gli Atti. Considerata tuttavia l'importanza e la vasta eco dei risultati dei suoi scavi, si è deciso di ripubblicare qui il contributo a suo tempo presentato per gli *Abstracts*, contando di poter avere per il secondo volume il testo completo.