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How ancient Egyptians' worldview emerges in their painting and architecture

So far we have discussed two kinds of worldviews in ancient Egypt. Now we discuss how such views have influenced their architecture and paintings. Because they believed that afterlife is for eternity and greater than the life. The tombs were the most important buildings for them and believed that those buildings should stay forever, so they made those far from the Nile River. Also, they made these tombs with best materializing examples meaning best materials and in the biggest size, which leads to a formal and huge

architecture of this land. But the building that they made for this mortal world is located near Nile River out of low-durable materials and from worldly view are not that great. Ancient Egyptians' worldview to the events is shown in paintings in different ways, for example, painting people working of this world in tombs, a Figure of judging people after death by weighting their heart, and embodiment of gods in natural events with worldly actions. Painting food and jewelry in tombs shows their belief in eternal life after death. In diagram 1 you can see a summary of above discussion.

## Conclusion

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According to the studies, ancient Egyptians' world view has two conclusions that affect their architecture and painting:

1. Their worldly view to life and afterlife. They saw every event in the world with a worldly approach.
2. The superiority of the world after death to this world is immortality. As mentioned before, they saw this world's life as a way of getting to perfection and immortality.

The worldly view of ancient Egyptian people can be deduced from a concept of time, death, and religion in their point of view. In their point of view, afterlife, as it is Figured in paintings of tombs, is a resumption of this world's life and every similar activity in this world is continued there. Even life after death's judgments is done using measuring the heart and comparing it with a weight of a feather. They believed that there is a direct connection between the goodness of a person with the weight of her heart and their spiritual judgment is a worldly judgment. Also, they had a god for every natural event, that was in charge of creating this event and gave each god a worldly figure that had a specific and worldly effect in their lives. Their belief that

the afterlife is greater and eternal can be seen in their view of time, death, and religion. For example, Djet that belongs to the afterlife is a still and eternal time but Neheh that belongs to life is moving time. They believed that with living in the Neheh time they become complete so that they can move to the afterlife and be eternal in Djet time. You can see this belief in religion, for example, Osiris, god of the afterlife, is a complete and eternal god. Based on the second belief, tombs that are the most important buildings in ancient Egypt should be eternal. Also based on their first belief tombs should have the best worldly appearance. For this reason, these buildings were massive and glorious, built with best and high-durable materials, and are far from Nile River, and palaces and cities, which were mortal, were built low-quality low-durable materials and were near the Nile River. painting of people working like this world in tombs, a Figure of judging people after death by weighting their heart, and embodiment of gods in natural events with worldly actions. Painting food and jewelry in tombs shows their belief in eternal life after death.

library research to understand the worldview of the people of this land. Then, with the help of these data and studying of their architectures and paintings, we analyze the relationship between the architecture of ancient Egyptian and the worldview of the people of this land.

### Discussion

This section discusses the architecture and painting in ancient Egypt and the connection between previous sections' data about ancient Egyptians' world view and their paintings and architecture.

#### Ancient Egypt Architecture

Architecture in ancient Egypt can be categorized into 3 eras:

- Old Kingdom Architecture from 2686 B.C. to 2181 B.C.
- Medieval Kingdom Architecture from 2181 B.C. to 1650 B.C.
- New Kingdom Architecture from 1650 B.C. to 1069 B.C.

Pyramids, rocky tombs, and glorious temples are the most outstanding architecture works in the old, middle, and new era, respectively. Rocks and bricks were mostly used materials in ancient Egypt. Houses and palaces were made of low-durable materials like brick and clay while tombs and temples were made of high-durable materials like Limestone, Granite, and Sandstone. Cities were closer to the Nile River than tombs and temples and were in way of Nile's annual floods. For these two reasons other than few examples, there is nothing left of them. The tombs and temples in Egypt do not have complex architectures but are massive and glorious. This can be seen in all of these 3 eras. For example, Khufu pyramid in Egypt has a base of 227 meters, a vertex of 217 meters, and height of 138 meters, and it fills up 5 hectares. Sphinx statue in Giza is also unique in terms of size in ancient times. As this paper mentioned before, architecture works in ancient Egypt has 4 traits:

1. Tombs and temples gigantic size in ancient Egypt and using high-durable rocky materials

show their builders had motives and reasons to build those for eternity.

2. Tombs and temples were built with high-durable rocky materials, while normally sized palaces were built with low-durable materials.

3. Tombs and temples were built far from the Nile River to avoid Nile's annual floods.

4. Egypt architecture is focused on the mass, but form, not space creation.

#### Painting in ancient Egypt

Due to painting's importance as a prominent decorative element in ancient Egyptian architecture, this section discusses painting art in ancient Egypt. Most of the paintings in the ancient Egypt were on the walls of tombs and temples, which shows importance and holiness of painting for ancient Egyptians. Also, keep in mind that limited people went to these places at specific times, so these paintings not only were for decoration but also were gods' and myths' embodiments. We can categorize paintings in ancient Egypt in 2 groups:

1. Paintings reflecting people's daily life.
2. Paintings reflecting gods and myth.

The first group contains real elements and the readers won't find any trace of symbolic art in it. But the second group has a lot of unreal elements in it, for example, you can see in image 1 there are creatures that are the mixture of human and animals with unrealistic colors. Most of the elements in these paintings have colors and shape of animals with symbolic meanings. The most common paintings in the first group are paintings of the people's daily life on the walls of the tomb. These paintings show that they believed that afterlife is the resumption of this life. Symbolic Figures of gods show that they believed that gods have control in both of life and afterlife worlds. Although you can see changes in paintings of these 3 eras, these 2 group stayed the same. The most prominent difference in artworks in these eras is a god's appearance or disappearance based on the time that the tomb was built.

tended to visualize all natural events especially regular ones. Because, on the one hand, the reason for the order of nature and its forces was mysterious for them, and on the other hand, their lives depended on these forces, and they did not have the power to control them. Thus, by visualizing natural forces as numerous gods, these forces became more understandable to them. For example, the arrival of the annual floods was a sign of Hapy's coming. They assumed that Hapy pours water into the Nile with a jug from above? (Durant, 1991: 166). By worshipping these gods and taking religious celebrations for them, they in some way communicated with these forces of nature and felt more secure.

### Ancient Egyptian worldview

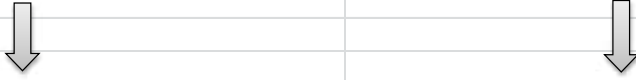
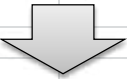
This paper extracted two common points from ancient Egyptians view in the concepts of time, death, and religion. The first point is their materialistic look to this world and the world after death. Their interpretation of all phenomena and events in the world has been materialistic.

The second point is the superiority of the world of after death to this world because of its immortality.

### Methodology

In this qualitative study, first of all, we gather information on the concepts of time, death and religion in ancient Egypt with the help of

Table 1. The summary of discussion and their results. Source : Author.

Review of the Dimensions of Ancient Egyptian Worldview		Worldview Dimensions
continuity of the material life of this world in the underground world	immortality of the life of after death	death
judgment of the deaths (spiritual) happened as a material one		
The weight of the human's heart (material agent) used as their good and evil criterion (spiritual)		
The embodiment of God with material acts for all the regular natural phenomena of the world	naming Osiris the eternal perfect god	religion
Incarnate the Sun motion with the Neheh for the world on Earth and the stability of death with the djet for the underground world	consideration of the cyclic time of Neheh in this world and the immortal time of Djet in the underground world	time
	Trying to achieve perfection at the time of the Neheh to move to eternal time of Djet	
		
The materialistic look of ancient Egyptians to all the phenomena and events of the world	The superiority of the world of after death to this world because of its immortality	
		
<b>architecture</b>		
locating the tombs far from the Nile (preventing their destruction due to annual floods)		
The image of the everyday life on the walls of the sanctuaries (imagination of material life for the world of after death)		
Making the monuments (The most important spaces) in the most magnificent form and with the best materials (The best material expression)		
Fractional dimensions of the monument and the superiority of the volume and structure of the architecture on the spatialization (indicates material importance)		
<b>painting</b>		
the pictures of every day life of ancient Egyptians on the monument's walls		
the pictures of the judgment day in the underground world with weighting the person's heart (Spiritual judgment with material means)		
the pictures which depict the phenomena of nature as gods with material actions		
pictures of foods and jewelries in the cemetery		

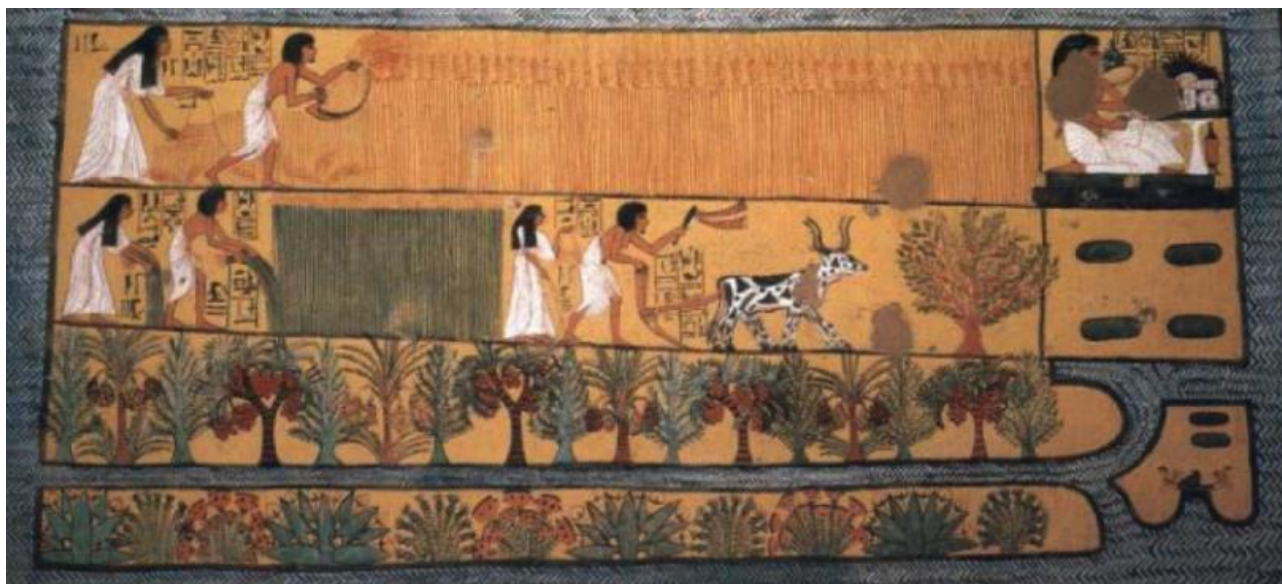


Fig. 2. the Figure of daily life of the ancient Egyptians. Source: Marie & Hagen, 1999: 171

### The concept of religion

The Ancient Egyptian were very naturalistic like the people of other ancient civilizations. They considered gods for every systematic force in nature such as the sun, the Nile, the air, the soil and other natural forces that had an effect on their lives. The forces that have regular cycle were considered sacred and divine (Assmann, 200). In the eyes of the ancient Egyptian, nothing can be happened accidentally and without the intervention of these natural forces. Therefore, events like the sunset, which is natural and ordinary for modern humans, is considered to be a birthday party for the ancient Egyptian. They believed that if the gods leave the world completely, the fundamental structures of the world would collapse into Chaos, and everything that related to this structure would be destroyed (Assmann, 2001). Jan (Assmann, 2002) calls this a “cosmotheism”, the notion that the universe is at the center of it and concludes the consensus of many gods (Assmann, 2008). Ancient Egyptian made legends of the gods

from Regular events of the world, including Earth-moving around the sun, the rotation of the day and night, and the annual flood of the Nile River. From their point of view, the whole world was not considered as a single entity, but as varied actions and interactions of numerous gods. So the gods play a role in the events depending on their power (Assmann, 2001). Although the ancient Egyptian worshiped many gods throughout all the historical periods, during the reign of Akhenaten, he tried to unite the Egyptians to worship one god. He changed his name from Amnaphise 4, which marked the power of the god of Ammon, to Akhenaten and converted to the worship of the only God, Athens (Wilkinson, 2003). Under his command, the temples of all gods, except the God of Athens, were destroyed. Despite all the efforts of Akhenaten, after his death, the ancient Egyptian continued to worship many gods, and this indicates the institutionalization of such thinking in the ancient Egyptian (Assmann, 2002); (Fig.3) According to this study, ancient Egyptian

## Djet

In contrast to Neheh which has an eternal movement, there is no motion in Djet. Ancient Egyptians believed that they should live in the Neheh time to become complete and perfect so that they can move to the afterlife and be eternal in Djet time. The death and the afterlife are the most apparent manifestation of Djet. Osiris, the god of the underground world, was named immortal perfect god (Wilkinson, 2003). Neheh is the time for the world with Ra's reign and Djet is the time for the underground world with Osiris's reign. It should be noticed that Djet is the time for who have been completed in the past time during the cyclic periods of Neheh. So, Djet is not a linear time nor something which has been passed. The ancient Egyptian belief of Djet is apparent from their funeral and burial ceremonies. For example, the purpose of building the pyramids and mummifying were to make them immortal for the period of Djet. The interview of Neheh and Djet.

Ra goes to the underground world at night and becomes one with Osiris. At the same time, Djet and Neheh overlap. Ra, who is dead at

night, refreshes in the Djet period to be reborn in the other day and become immortal like Osiris (Assmann, 2001). The time-centric cosmology of ancient Egyptian contains Djet and Neheh (Assmann, 2002: 73). Also, Ra and Osiris are depended to each other like Djet and Neheh.

The concept of death

Ancient Egyptians believed that despite the underground world, this world is mortal. Osiris is the main god of the underground world who judges people after their death (Assmann: 2009, 2002: 47). In (Fig.1), the gods weight a person's heart to judge them. If his heart is lighter than a feather, he would be immortal in the underground world. The life of after death was reflected in the continuity of the life of this world. For this reason, they painted the daily life on the tombs' walls (Fig.2).

It seems that everything is materialistic for ancient Egyptian. Therefore, the difference between life and afterlife is the circular time of Neheh in contrast to the immortal time of Djet.



Fig.1. the judgment of people after their death in the underground world. Source: <httpwww.crystalinks.comegyptart.html>.

## Introduction

Ancient Egypt was one of the first large human civilization and it was in the northeast of Africa and located at the heart of the trade route between the African and Mediterranean countries. This land is a waterside near the Nile River, which is encircled by the desert from the west and east and there is the Mediterranean Sea and the Nile River respectively at the north and south of this country. Herudet believes that ancient Egyptians are the most religious people in ancient time (Zarei, 2009: 36). Also in comparison to other ancient civilizations, the life of after death is more important for them (Watts & Girsh, 1998: 27). In general, the ancient Egyptians believed that living in this world is to achieve prosperity in the afterlife and their arts were based on this attitude towards life (Gardner, 1991: 72). Historical architecture of ancient Egypt had three periods which consist of the architecture of old kingdom (2150-2649 B.C), the architecture of medieval kingdom (1640-2030 B.C) and architecture of new kingdom (1069-1650 B.C). Pyramids, rocky monuments, and magnificent temples, are the most prominent architectural works of the ancient, middle and new periods of ancient Egypt, respectively. The Tombs and

temples have huge dimensions and made from durable materials in contrast with their ordinary and royal houses which made in mud and brick which nothing has been remained from them now. In addition, their Tombs and temples are located far from their city and the Nile River. This process can be seen in all historical periods of ancient Egyptian architecture.

The paper's goal is to find the relationship between the architecture of ancient Egyptian and The worldview of the people of this land. In this qualitative study, first of all, we gather information on the concepts of time, death and religion in ancient Egypt with the help of library research to understand the worldview of the people of this land. Then, with the help of these data and studying their architectures and paintings, we analyze the relationship between the architecture of ancient Egyptian and the worldview of the people of this land.

With this backdrop, I address the following questions in this paper:

- What is the relation between ancient Egyptian's world view and their architecture and painting?
- Which points in ancient Egyptian's world view affect architecture and painting of them?

## Literature review

According to lack of information in Persian about architecture and world view of ancient Egyptians, we use English sources most of which were written by Assmann. He is a professor at Heidelberg University in Germany. This part of the paper studies ancient Egyptians' perspective of time, death, and religion. In addition, it searches the main common points in them.

The concept of time

The concept of time in ancient Egypt is very different from the modern concept of time. Ancient Egyptian considered two kinds of time called Neheh and Djet. There are no equivalents for these words in English or

Persian. In the following section of the paper, each of the concepts are discussed in detail. Neheh

Neheh is a cyclic time which comes from regular natural events such as the earth's circular motion around the sun. Ancient Egyptian considered the sun as the god, Ra, who travels around the sky in his boat and dies and goes to the underground world at night to reborn at the other day (Wilson, 1946). Ancient Egyptians believed that there is another eternal life for every death person, gods and objects like the sun and they saw the death as a moment from a huge process.

# Investigations of Ancient Egyptians Worldview and how it Relates to Their Architecture and Painting

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## Abstract

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Ancient Egypt is one of the first large human civilizations from which lots of archaeological relics and paintings have remained. The architectural designs of the ancient Egyptian have several special features. The most highlighted ones are their tombs and temples which have huge dimensions and made from durable materials, while their ordinary and royal houses which made in mud and brick which nothing has been remained from them now. In addition, their tombs and temples are located far from their city and the Nile River. This process can be seen in all historical periods of ancient Egyptian architecture. The paper's goal is to find the relationship between the architecture of ancient Egyptian and the worldview of the people of this land. In this qualitative study, first of all, we gathered information on the concepts of time, death and religion in ancient Egypt with the help of library research to understand the worldview of the people of this land. Then, with the help of these data and studying their architectures and paintings, we analyzed the relationship between the architecture of ancient Egyptian and the worldview of the people of this land. Our findings showed that paintings of ancient Egypt and its architectures reflected the worldview of the people of this land, which contains their materialistic vision of this world and the world of after life and also Excellence and immortality of the after life's world than this world.

## Keywords

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Egypt; Tombs, Worldview, Life of after death.