

**Staircases of Upper Egyptian Temples in the Graeco-Roman
Period**

By

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Abstract

This article deals with the different terms used to designate the staircase in the different periods of ancient Egyptian history or associated with the staircase. It also considers the architectural and mythological/ religious functions of the staircase. The different forms or shaped of the staircase will be the final element discussed in the chapter.

Keywords: Staircases, Upper Egyptian Temples, the Graeco-Roman Period.

Introduction

This article is divided into two/ three sections: the first aims to reviews the several terms which are used to designate the meaning of staircase or are associated with it. also to outline the deities associate with these terms. The second section aims to classify the different types of staircases of the temples of the Graeco-Roman period in Upper Egypt.

Terminology

This section highlights the different terms used to describe or designate the staircase in the Graeco-Roman period. For systematic reasons, it will be arranged alphabetically.

Determinatives

The Determinative (𐀀)

This determinative can refer to either the staircase or a hill with one ascending side. Earliest examples of this determinative date back to the old kingdom when it took the shape of only three steps (𐀀) as the labels¹ (figures 1.2.3.4) tell. Onwards, it took the shape of stool with steps that could be more than three. Then it took this shape (𐀁) till the second dynasty, then (𐀂) till the middle kingdom. In the middle kingdom, it started to appear as (𐀃) in coffin texts. Later in the new kingdom both were used but the (𐀄-wꜥs) was so common. In the late period onwards those four were used side by side. Kessler believes that the signs and determinatives of (𐀀 and 𐀅) are all expressing the same meaning, or at least they all are referring to the help to the deceased in the netherworld.

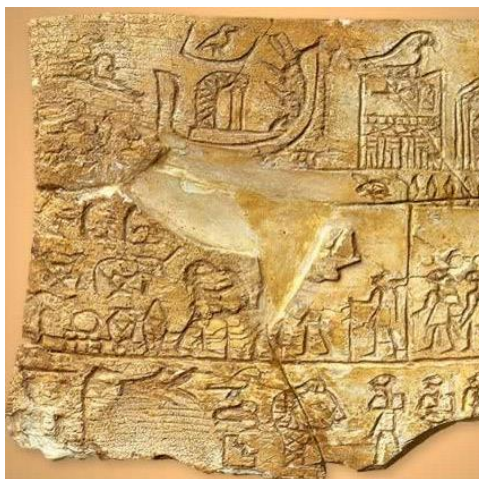


Fig 1



Fig 2

¹ labels are of Cairo museum, JE 31773 (CG 14142)- British museum, EA32650, Pennsylvania national museum, E9396- Berlin museum,



Fig 3

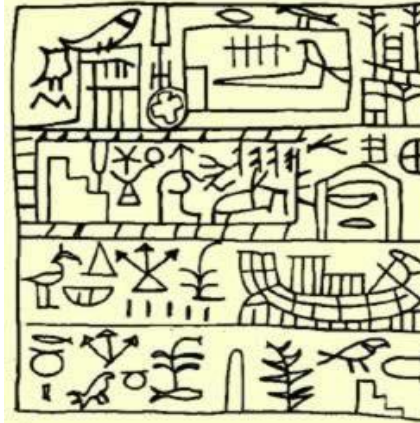
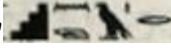
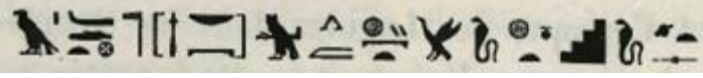



Fig 4

It is associated with the terms *rd*, *rdw*, *rwd*, and *htyw*. The determinative is perhaps an indication for the myrrh cultivated cliffs in Punt, the turquoise cliffs in Sinai or the cedar cliffs in Lebanon as Sethe² and Engel³ suggested. It may refer to the throne of Horus as Griffith thought⁴. Generally, the determinative has five steps, but the number of the steps can range from three to five steps. It frequently appears in the Pyramid and coffin texts. For example, the sign refers to many concepts with symbolic connotations such as the staircase of the throne, the heaven, and of the primeval mound.

The determinative continued to be widely used in the Graeco-Roman period; inscriptions of temples of Hathor at Dendara and Horus at Edfu heavily mentioned this determinative. At temple of Horus one

finds "  " *rwd n pr ijr r* " which means "It is the staircase by which Horus ascends towards the sky". Another Example for referring to the meaning of a throne of Horus "


 " *Hr bhdti ntr ca nb pt mi m hy-t shn k hnd(w) k hnt s*", which give the meaning "O Horus of edfu great deity back to the sky of the temple for your pose on the throne which exist in the sancturay". Another inscription

at the first colonnade west  ", which emphasis the

² Sethe ZAS 44 p 134

³ Engel EM Das grab des qaa in umm el-waa Architectur und inventor, PHD thesis Gottingen university 1997 p 463

⁴ Emery ,the tomb of Hemaka , cairo 1938 p 38

meaning of staircase "ascend the staircase in front of the deity". Also at the second colonnade east, this phrase "ascend the staircase, in front of your tabernacle", or .⁵

The Determinative ()

This determinative visualizes a double staircase or two opposite staircases, which seem to represent the stepped base of the royal throne. Architecturally, the sign first appeared in the complex of king Djoser during the third dynasty, where the stepped pyramid of the king takes the shape of this determinative (fig.5). It also appeared in the fourth dynasty during the reign of king Senefru. The determinative was included in the terms *k33* or *k33i*, which mean a staircase, a hill, or a high place. It also occurs in the terms *r*, *i*, or *i**r*, which designates the verb "to ascend" as we in the inscription of the western staircase of Hathor Temple of Dendara at the thickness of the windows"



", which gives the meaning of "to ascend" so the translation could be as Marriette see " the wind that ascend through the siege is the west wind".^{6 7} An architectural and physical representation of the determinative can be found just to left side of the first pylon of Isis temple on Philae (fig. 6).

⁵ Alliot, Maurice - Le culte d'Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées 1954

⁶ Marriette, August Dendara grand temple de cette ville II 1870 p 40

⁷ WB. I 208,3 : HWB p.93: Chassinat E, le temple de Dendara p .46:Gardiner AH Egyptian grammar p 497



Fig 5



Fig 6

Architecturally, it gives access to the inner ambulatory of the temple. The double staircase on Philae consists of two parts, which were joined together, judging from the dividing line between the two sections. It appears that the two sections were a later addition to the temple. It used to facilitate access to and from the inner ambulatory.

There is also another architectural representation in the back of the pylon of Kalabsha Temple (Fig 7.8.9). The form of this determinative varied; the number of the steps ranged from three to four. In some cases, the double staircase is mounted with a vestibule or an enthroned vestibule. The determinative is used to designate the staircase, which leads to the vestibule upon which the throne of the king rests or to the festival halls. This determinative played an important symbolic role in ancient Egyptian mythology, representing the primeval mound upon which everything was created.⁸ This symbolism will be later discussed in full detail.



Fig 7

⁸ Saleh MDAIK 25 p 119



Fig 8



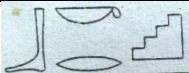
Fig 9

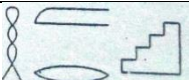
Terms



There are many terms used to refer to the stairs and/or the staircases. These are discussed in the following section.

<i>bḏi</i>	
	<p>This term appeared in the late period and continued into the Graeco-Roman to refer to the staircase or the staircase of the throne. It could also refer to a stair or a throne made out of gold.⁹</p>
<i>bḥdw</i>	
	<p>This term appeared from the new kingdom till the Ptolemaic and roman period referring to "the throne of deity or a king". There were several determinatives for this term in the texts of the Ptolemaic and roman period (𓂏, 𓂐, 𓂑).</p> <p>It is worth to mention that this term was associated heavily with deity Horus during the Graeco-Roman period. Here in the inscriptions of the temple of Horus in Edfu <i>bḥdt hr</i>, which means "the throne or the stair of Horus".</p> <p>In another expression <i>hry bḥdt.k</i>, which means "towards your stair" that goes to north. Also it may refer to Horus which belongs to Edfu throne. There is also another</p>

⁹ WB. I 487, 12

	expression which exists in the vestibule of Ra in Edfu <i>ḥr bḥdt.t m wṯst ḥr</i> which means upon the stair of the throne of Horus. ¹⁰
<i>bḥr</i>	
	This term occurred in texts of the graeco roman period to refer to the stair or the steps of the stair. Also, it would refer to the throne but with other forms. ¹¹

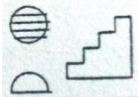

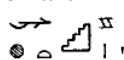

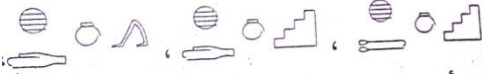
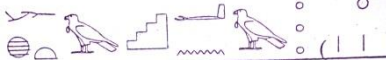
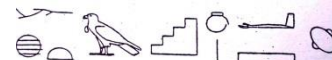
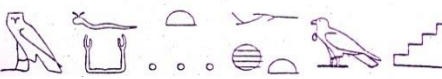
<i>ḥmr</i>	
	This term mentioned heavily during the graeco roman period referring to the throne or the stair. it refers to the stair exactly when it accompanied with the determinative(𓂏). It is worth to mention that this term associated with deity Horus in the texts of the Graeco- Roman Period in the temple of Edfu.


<i>ḥnd</i>	
	This term appeared firstly in the Old Kingdom; give the meaning of the thrones of kings or deities as well. Later during the New Kingdom, it gave the meaning of the staircase that leads to the roof of the temple. In the Late period, it was associated with deity <i>pt3ḥ</i> . During the Greco-Roman Period, the term <i>ḥnd</i> took many forms such as  . ¹²



¹⁰ WB I 470

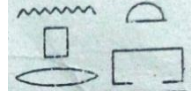
¹¹ Marriette, Dendara II p,66

¹² WB I p 482,8

<p><i>ḥtyw</i></p> 	
	<p>This form of the term (<i>ḥtyw</i>) also referring to the stepped cliffs or the throne in the texts of the new kingdom and the ptolemaic and roman period specially in the inscriptions of temples of Dendara, Edfu and Philae.</p> <p><i>"ḥtyw"</i> </p> <p>This term appeared in the Old Kingdom to mean the staircase or a cliff but later on in the new kingdom it took the form "</p> <p> " or </p> <p></p> <p><i>"ḥntyw ḥntyw"</i> </p> <p>This term was used to express the cliffs of the <i>myrrh</i> or cultivated land in Punt.</p> <p><i>"ḥntyw nw š (t)"</i> . This term is used to express the cliffs of the cedar cultivated land in Lebanon.</p> <p><i>ḥntyw mfkzt</i> </p> <p>This term was used to express the cliffs of the turquoise in Sinai.</p>

<p><i>Ḥp</i></p>	<p>Ḥp </p>
	<p>This term appeared in the Graeco-Roman period, heavily associated with deity Horus as it appeared in the inscriptions of Horus temple in Edfu. The expression <i>r ip.k "Ri pk"</i>, which means "toward thou staircase".</p>

<i>mfh</i>	
	<p>This term appeared in the new kingdom and continued to the graeco roman period but with other forms referring to "to support" we can abstract here that the stair which was used in the netherworld to help the deceased to ascend was supported and strengthened.¹³</p>
<i>mn-bit</i>	
	<p>This term appeared in the New kingdom especially during the Eighteenth Dynasty. In the graeco roman period it associated with the determinative (𓏏) to refer to the stair or the throne. Moreover, when this term appears with the term (𓏏𓏏𓏏), it refers to "the royal coronation podium". What ensured this meaning is the phrase which exist in one anthem for Osiris ". Worth to mention that this term associated also with deity Horus in several inscriptions of Horus temple in Edfu.¹⁴</p>

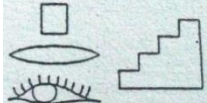
<i>npr.t</i>	
	<p>This term refers to the flight of stairs¹⁵, "<i>nprt</i>" is clearly used for a flight of stairs at edfu but does not seem to occur anywhere else. It is particularly used in the texts of the new year processions: eastern stairway <i>pr hr.f</i>. Thus, there is a clear connection with the word "<i>nprt</i>" "stairway" or a straight flight as found at edfu so that the word may always have had this underlying notion.¹⁶</p>

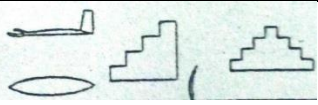
¹³ Deveria ZAS 8 p 62


¹⁴ Duminchen ZAS 5, p.6.

¹⁵ (Wb II 249)

¹⁶ P.Wilson 1991

Pr	
	<p>This term appeared rarely during the Graeco-Roman Period referring to the staircase or the primeval mound. The best example for that meaning occurs in temple of Karnak in the second pylon in one of the inscriptions which refer to King Ptolemy VIII (Eurgetes II).</p>

ꜥ	
	<p>This term appeared from the old kingdom and continued till the Ptolemaic and roman period. it has two meanings, the first when it is used as a verb, it means "to ascend". The second is the nominal form; it refers to the staircase or ladder by which the deceased ascend to reach heaven.</p>



Rd	 17
	<p>This term appeared firstly in the reign of the old kingdom, it was mainly refer to the staircase but also it would refer to the verb (to ascend) when the sign (𐀓) replaced with (b). Perhaps this verb is the origin of the term of stair in the ancient Egyptian language¹⁸. Although this term appeared firstly in the old kingdom, it was used commonly in the reign of the middle kingdom. We can clearly notice that from the memorial stelae that were found in the area of Kom Sultan at Abydos¹⁹, also it is worth to mention that this term was associated heavily at that time with the phrase <i>rd n ntr ʿ3</i>. Later on in the same reign of the middle</p>

¹⁷ Erman, A & Grappow, H 1982

¹⁸ Dumichen ZAS-10

¹⁹ Gauthier H 1925-31- those stelae are now in the Egyptian Museum (CG- 20479. 20099. 20153)

	<p>kingdom, it associated with <i>Wr</i> which means the great staircase; this notice is obviously seen in the coffin texts²⁰. Nevertheless it might also associated with deities like Hathor²¹ or Osiris, just as in Berlin Museum stela²².</p> <p>Later in the New kingdom, it would refer also to kings, as it was described in the inscription that belongs to king Tutmosis III in Temple of Karnak as a new title "<i>rd nt nb Ipt swt</i>". This could not refer to that the Expression "<i>rd n ntr ʿ3</i>" got less importance at that time because it continued to be used heavily in the eighteenth Dynasty with a variety of forms, Most scholars would suggest that this term refers to the stair of Osiris in the temple of Sety I in Abydos.</p> <p>During the Graeco-Roman period, it continued to appear with the regular form <i>rd</i>, as the inscriptions of temple of Edfu at the entrance of the eastern staircase show. Also it appeared with a new form <i>rt</i>, when the scribe replaced the sign (d) with (t). It could also associate with the king as we can read "<i>.f r rd</i>" in the texts of the entrance of the eastern staircase of temple of Edfu.²³</p>
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Rdw	
	<p>This term is considered to be the plural form of the term <i>rd</i> which was appeared in the old kingdom but here we notice that the ancient Egyptian inscribed the plural sign of (b) to indicate the multi-steps of the staircase itself while maintaining the determinative of  as a single one. This term could also refer to the staircase of the temple²⁴. While in the Graeco-Roman Period this term appeared in this form <i>rdw</i> giving the same meaning of staircase.</p>

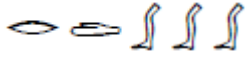

²⁰ CT I. 12 a : 380 d :V 167d :IV 106b VII 161a.










²¹ Urk IV 115,117

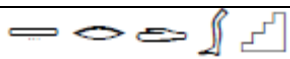
²² Berlin Museum, no. 1191

²³ Alliot 1954

²⁴ Sander-Hansen, CE, 1963

Rwd	
	<p>This term appeared firstly in the old kingdom to refer to a staircase, the stair of a tomb, staircase of heaven or staircase of throne. It had also associated with the term of <i>wr</i> like the term of <i>rd</i>. moving on in the middle kingdom, coffin texts show a variety of forms of this term. Later in the Greco-Roman period it took the form of <i>rt</i>  as in the inscriptions of the temples of Dendara and Edfu.</p>


Rpyt							
	<p>Alliot translated "<i>rpyt</i>" as the stairs or the steps themselves. But <i>nrpt</i> is the whole stairway. At points in the description of the temple the numbers of steps in a stairway are given the word used to denote the steps are "<i>rpyt</i>": 83 85 90. Also there is clearly a connection with "<i>rpyt</i>" female statue where steps are considered as goddesses or female representations.</p> <p>At points in the description of the temple the numbers of steps in a stairway are given the word used to denote the steps are <i>rpyt</i>:</p> <table data-bbox="397 1120 891 1294"> <tr> <td data-bbox="397 1120 452 1168"></td> <td data-bbox="768 1120 891 1168">83 steps</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="397 1188 452 1236"></td> <td data-bbox="768 1188 891 1236">85 steps</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="397 1255 452 1294"></td> <td data-bbox="768 1255 891 1294">90 steps</td> </tr> </table> <p>There is clearly a connection with "<i>rpyt</i>" female statue where steps are considered as goddesses or female representations²⁵.</p>		83 steps		85 steps		90 steps
	83 steps						
	85 steps						
	90 steps						

<i>t3-rd</i>	
	<p>This term appeared in the old kingdom in the pyramid</p>

²⁵ P.Wilson, Lexicographical study 1991 p 430.

texts to refer to the stair or the cliffs, perhaps the word *t3* indicates that the material of the staircase is made out of clay. In the Greco-Roman period this term had a wide variety of forms:



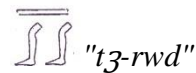
 "*t3-rdw(y)*" this form is considered to be the dual case of the term, the two sign of (b). This form was used in the inscriptions of the Eastern staircase of the temple of edfu widely.

"t3-rwd"

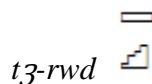
this form appeared in the temples of Edfu and Dendara to refer to the staircase. in the texts of the temple of Edfu, *t3-rd i3bt (n) stwt šw*, which means The Eastern Staircase of the rays of the sun²⁶



this term appeared in texts of the late period but continued widely in texts of the Greco-Roman period²⁷.



This form appeared heavily in the temple of Edfu and the temple of Dendara to refer to the staircase or the throne as well, also the tunnel that leads to the eastern staircase was called "the staircase of the winged sun deity".

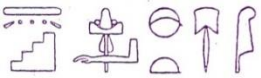
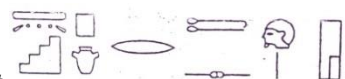



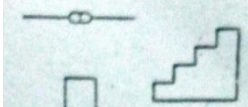

This term appeared in texts of temple of Edfu to mean the staircase.

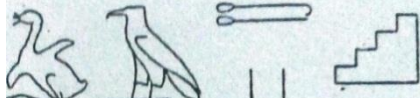
Expressions

²⁶ Dumichen ZAS 10 1872-98

²⁷ Erman, A & Grappow, H 1982 & Gardiner onomastica.

	<p><i>t3 rd i3bt n stwt šw</i> </p> <p><i>t3 rd pw ib r ts tpy hwt</i> </p> <p><i>t3 rd</i> </p>
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<i>Sp3</i>	
	<p>This term appeared in the old kingdom with several forms as it appeared in the pyramid texts to refer to the throne but in the Graeco-Roman Period it appeared with the determinative() as in the texts of Horus temple in Edfu in the expression "<i>hr spa.k</i> " which means toward your stair to the north.²⁸</p>

<i>nt3</i>	
	<p>This term appeared from the new kingdom till the Ptolemaic and roman period. it is worth to mention that this term associated with deities like (Osiris, Hours, Ihy hor). Mostly preceded by the adjective (nbt)as in the</p>


²⁸ WB.I 470, 3-4

	expression :nbt tntat means lord of stair or lord of throne ²⁹ .
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²⁹ OLA, III, p 785

Comments

Due to the numerous vocabularies of the staircases we could abstract that there were a lot of types and specifications for each of those vocabularies. Most of those terms refer to the staircase in general but those could also hold another meaning directly and indirectly way. The term could also associate with deity or to resemble a particular form. General characteristic features of hieroglyphic inscriptions of stair vocabulary in the Greco roman period. Sudden reverse of the writing direction It is known that the ancient Egyptian writing whether starting from left toward right or from right to left but what frequently happen in the Ptolemaic-roman period is a mixture

between both. For example:  The reasons for that may be to give an underlined refer to the importance of the reversed direction to the word. We can take the scene of the staircase of Dendara temple as evidence.

Disorder of writing signs as usual, we can notice that there are some signs were added which is not necessary to be exist, till it becomes

hard to understand the meaning.  Here we can notice that the word of *rwd* means the stairs but in this inscription it read as *ri atr*.

- 1- That the ancient Egyptian language gave a great importance for the stairs terms and specified usages for almost all objects.
- 2- The terms of the stair in ancient Egyptian language referred also as we may use in Arabic language to refer to the throne, we say in Arabic as a metaphor "الكرسي"

ARCHITECTURE

The Functions of Staircases

Staircases have two main functions in ancient Egypt, whether in the Pharaonic or Graeco-Roman period. The first is the architectural function associated with transition, like ascending and descending.³⁰ The second is the mythological and religious function, which is mentioned both directly and indirectly in many texts in the Graeco-

Michael Tutton Staircases: History, Repair and Conservation · James W. P. Campbell
Conservation

Roman period and can be seen in the physical representations of the stairs in Egyptian temples. The overall architectural design of the temple serves a mythological concept in which the temple in ancient Egypt was supposed to be the dwelling of the deity. This religious symbolism survived through the Graeco-Roman period, when all the architectural elements of the temple were built to serve this concept. The temple was considered to be the primeval mound, which was surrounded with water and forces of chaos, here is the need to build the temple in higher levels, then the need for staircases.

The Architectural Function of the Staircase

Stairs were architectural elements of connectivity, serving as ascending and descending structures. They provided a system of transition between different levels of the buildings and structural elements of the temple. They also gave access to the chambers, inner halls, ambulatories, Nilometers, and roofs.³¹

The staircase that lead to the roof, where festivals and ceremonies were conducted, Dendara, Edfu and Kom Ombo of Ptolemaic roman temples.

These roof areas were used not only for matters of practical building maintenance but also in the rituals of various temples. The reliefs and scenes of the sides of the staircases are showing what is related to the concepts. At Dendara and Edfu the western and eastern staircases show the New Year festival ceremonies. Walls of those staircases were used for documentation of what exactly happen during rites, which was itself decorated with figures of the king and the gods participating in this very procession. An indication for access or for decoration, according to the stair that leads from the Edfu Temple Mamissi to the forecourt (measures approximately from 20cm to 22cm height), it is not reaching a higher level or easing access, it only might be for a decoration (Fig 10).

³¹ Richard H. Wilkinson , the complete temples of ancient Egypt 2000 page 66.



Fig 10

Mythological and Religious functions

From the oldest examples of the Dynastic periods the staircases played a great role in the mythological context. Staircases were built to reduce light stage by stage as the ceiling is on one level so that putting more steps in every stage or level so that light will be reduced to make the inside is dark contra to outside. this will serve the concept of the deity is hidden inside and can see everything outside but nothing outside can see what is exists inside in the holly of hollies. In the Greco-Roman period the staircases continued to serve an important role in performing ceremonies. Mainly, staircase served the same concept in mythology which is ascending toward heaven just as the religion texts mention but also to serve a religion function like the staircases of temple of Dendara and Edfu which reach the terrace area.

In Dendara, there are two staircases that reach the roof, one run east and the other west of the temple. Both are planned for the rise and the end of the divine procession, the day of the New Year's feast as well as for certain other solemnities. Hathor, her companions

and all their religious needs were brought to the roof of the temple of, by one of these stairs, to fulfill the rite of the Union with the Solar Disk. This rite performed on the toil of the temple. The divinities, each guarded in a naos, as well as their cult accessories, were brought back by the same staircase of the temple. "Each wall of each of the two staircases is covered with a band of frieze. These bands give a detailed, realistic and poetic description of the procession³².

In Edfu the staircases of the interior of the temple building on the East side and the west side, played the same role in the temple of Dendara but with deity Horus instead of Hathor.

TYOLOGY

Design

Forms of the Staircases are extraordinary diverse and their design can be traced through not just hundreds but thousands of years of human history. Even before humans made the two floors buildings they carved staircases into rock faces and such staircases worn by countless feet through the ages³³. Nevertheless, the ancient Egyptian architecture there was a various forms of staircases, also during the Greco-Roman period.

The history of the staircase as an architectural element has a great importance in the ancient Egyptian architecture. From the earliest examples of the staircases of the dynastic period till the Greco-roman period, the layer mastaba, the stepped pyramid and Giza pyramids of the old kingdom are great examples of these criteria. Moving on throughout the middle kingdom, the ruins of the temple of Montuhotep with the entrance stairway or ramp give the same meaning of the concept of ascension to the heaven. Then the new kingdom, we find the best example of giving a wide layout to the staircases in the mortuary temple of Hatshepsut, the straight flight with landing give the same concept of ascension also with an elegant view to the entrance. The typology is based on the geometrical layout of the architecture of staircases:

Straight flight

³² (Elkordy-zeinab\ Elshal-omima 2006).

³³ James W. P. Campbell· Michael Tutton Staircases: History, Repair and Conservation 2014

The straight flight is the most common form; it is a Straight line of an uninterrupted series of steps.³⁴ This type could be found in the temple of Philae opposite to the first pylon, the second pylon, the vestibule of Nectanebo, the Nilometer of Philae temple, the eastern staircase in Dendara temple and the eastern staircase in edfu temple. Most of architectures believe that Straight stairs tend to be the easiest to go up and down or ascend/descend and they are typically the easiest to be built, however this depends a lot on the level of detail in the design and the eastern staircase of Dendara and edfu are simple in design. Straight stairs connected at the top (the roof) and the bottom (no intermediate supporting structure is required). They work with inherent simplicity. The steps of the eastern staircase of temple of Dendara are very steep riser this it took more space and less effort to be ascended.

The eastern staircases of Dendara (Fig 11, 12) are straight and dark, consists of 97 steps. It was used during the feasts of deities. At the top of this staircase there is a block of sandstone was recycled holding the name of king Amenmhat (12th dynasty) walls of the staircase have a representations of the 56 priests which were represented on the quarter turn staircase.

³⁴ R.E. Putnam and G.E. Carlson, Architectural and Building Trades Dictionary, Third Edition, American Technical Publishers, Inc., 1974,

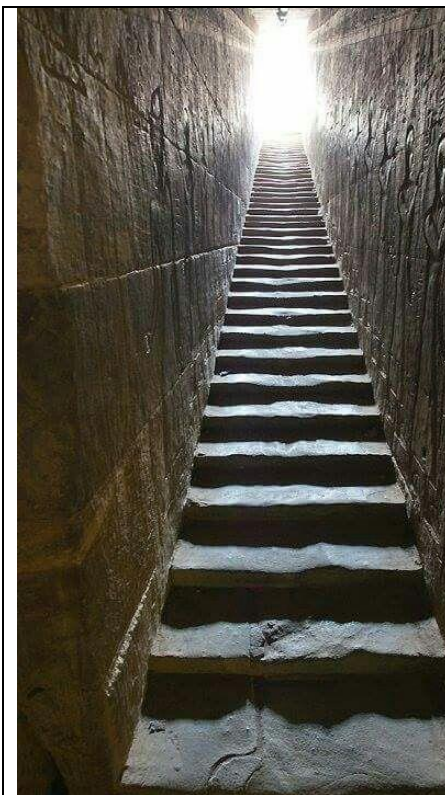


Fig 11

Edfu

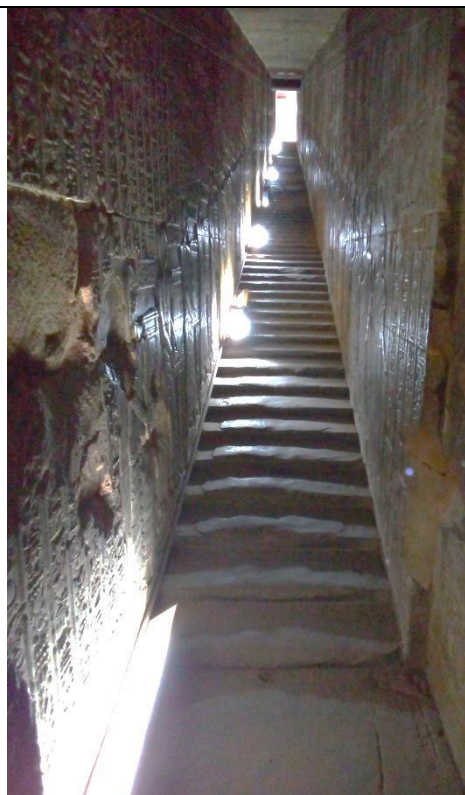


Fig 12

Dendara

Kom Ombo Mammisi

It was built to the southwest of the temple, what is still located now is just remains. The design of the Mammisi has a staircase in the middle of the entrance, with a low riser six stairs supported by plain small ramps. One might notice that the risers are relatively high in comparison with those of vestibule of Nectanebo in Philae complex because of the higher podium which reflex the relativity of the podium with staircases in the entrance design Fig 13.14.



Fig 13



Fig 14

Philae

The main temple has several flights of stairs but mainly two in the temple itself. one in front of the first pylon and the other in front of the second pylon. **The first pylon** (Fig 15), There is a straight flight of stairs consists of fourteen steps, flanked by three supporting blocks. Those stairs were made by the technique of laid blocks. At the top of the staircase there are two statues of lions of pink granite carved in roman style. Beside this flight locates a wide straight flight supported from the right side with thick baluster. **The second pylon** Fig 16 there is also a straight flight of stairs flanked by a plain border at an even slope from the top to the bottom.

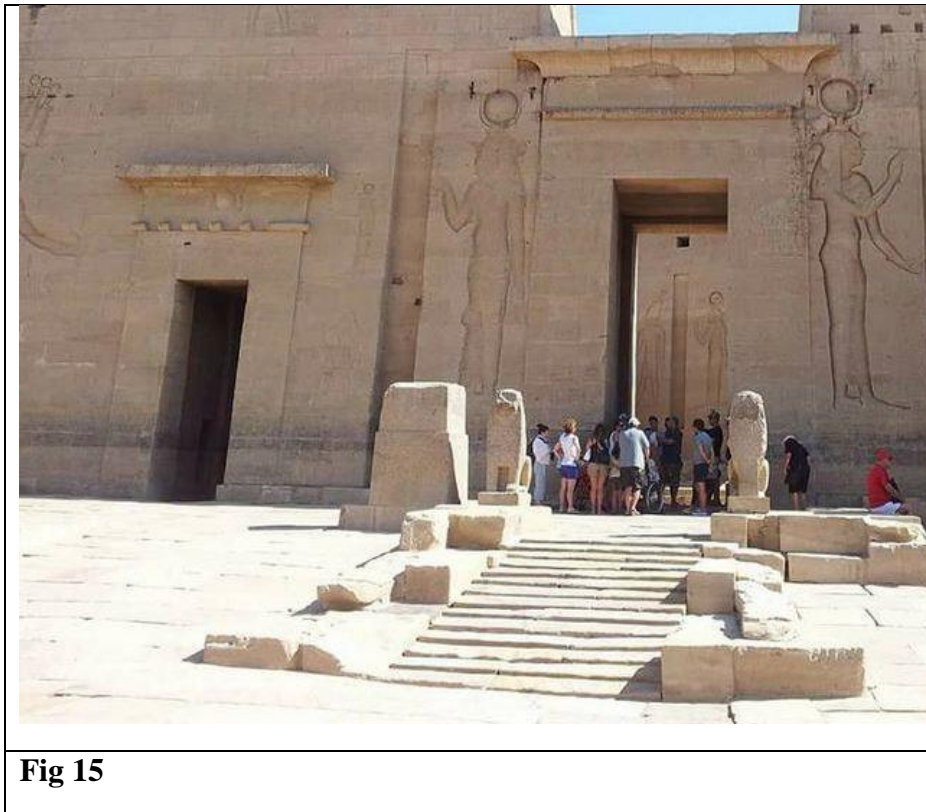


Fig 15

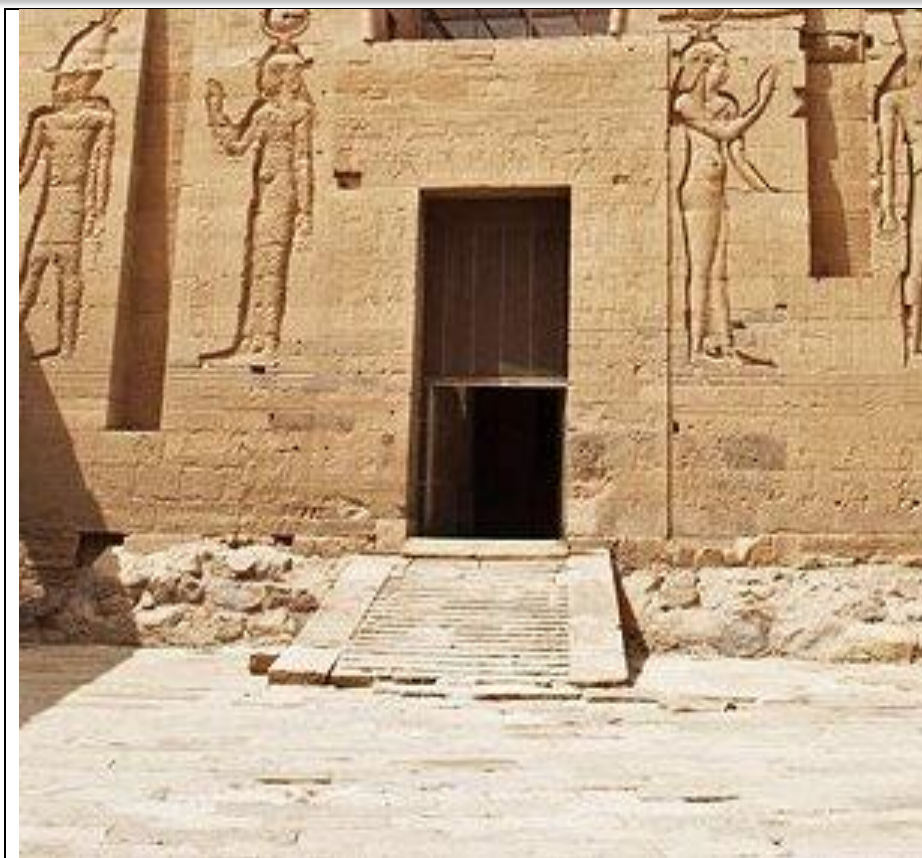


Fig 16

Nilometer of the temple of Philae

It locates at the west side of the main temple a the left of the first pylon; it is the type of the staircase. It takes the L shape with two flights. Walls are with no decoration except for two types of scales of measuring the highest point of the water level. There are three scales on the southern wall of the same type; apparently the highest one of them with a cross at the top of it. The other type exists on the northern wall, which is more accurate in lines and grades; maybe it was marked later than the first type. It seems that the walls were attempted to be distorted. There is another staircase exist in the opposite to the first pylon of the main temple, this staircase is straight flight consists of six steps leading to a dump end.



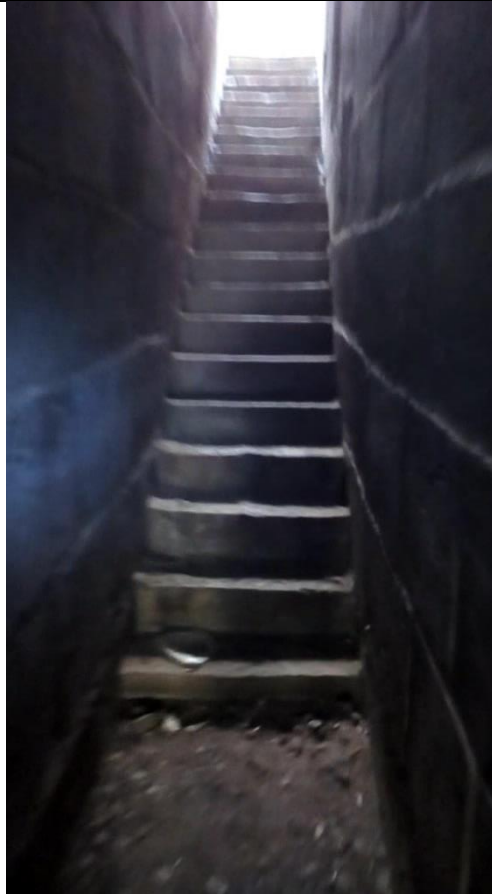


Fig 17

The Sacred Lake of Dendara

The "Sacred Lake" is located on the south-west of the Temple of Hathor; it has a rectangular shape 32x27meters. One can get down to its sandy bottom by means of four straight flights staircases, arranged clockwise along the walls of the Lake. At the beginning of each staircase there is a door in the enclosure wall of the edge of the lake which gives access to an entrance. At the southern wall there is a podium, on which maybe exist sacred objects.

There are remains of thick strong balustrades, one may guess the reason for building them is to get down to the lake, maybe there is another reason. They are built beside walls to gain support, the reason for building clockwise is to help descended to get down from any of the four sides. There is a block with the cut stairs, installed in the

masonry of the external wall on the west side of the Lake. The one block may contain several steps. It is difficult to suppose, whether it was planned originally as a part of a certain construction, or whether we see the signs of ancient repair . Once Going Down to the western stairs to the bottom of the "Sacred Lake. Here will pay attention to the underground crypts, located inside the walls of the Lake perimeter.



Fig 18



Fig 19



Fig 20



Fig 21

Quarter Landing

The western staircase of main temple of Dendara and The western staircase of temple of edfu, it takes 9 landings to reach the roof. Some architects believe that they are safer than straight stairs as the central landing reduces the number of treads one could fall in a given flight. The landing can provide a place to stop and rest while ascending. the west staircases of Dendara and Edfu are a rectangular of ten turns, lighted by small windows or ventilations, their sides decorated with symbolic representations of the inflowing rays of the sun.

The western staircase of temple of Dendara and Edfu.

It took the shape quarter turn and are divided into ten successive flights, built on a rectangular plane around a pillar Central of the same form with the riser height measures approximately ($\sim\pm 4$ cm) waves from stair to another. It is made out of granite and it's Usage: giving access to the roof. On each floor, two windows light up the passage, Windows are narrow toward outside getting wider gradually toward inside with representations of sun disk with rays of light which indicate that the main purpose were for lighting.

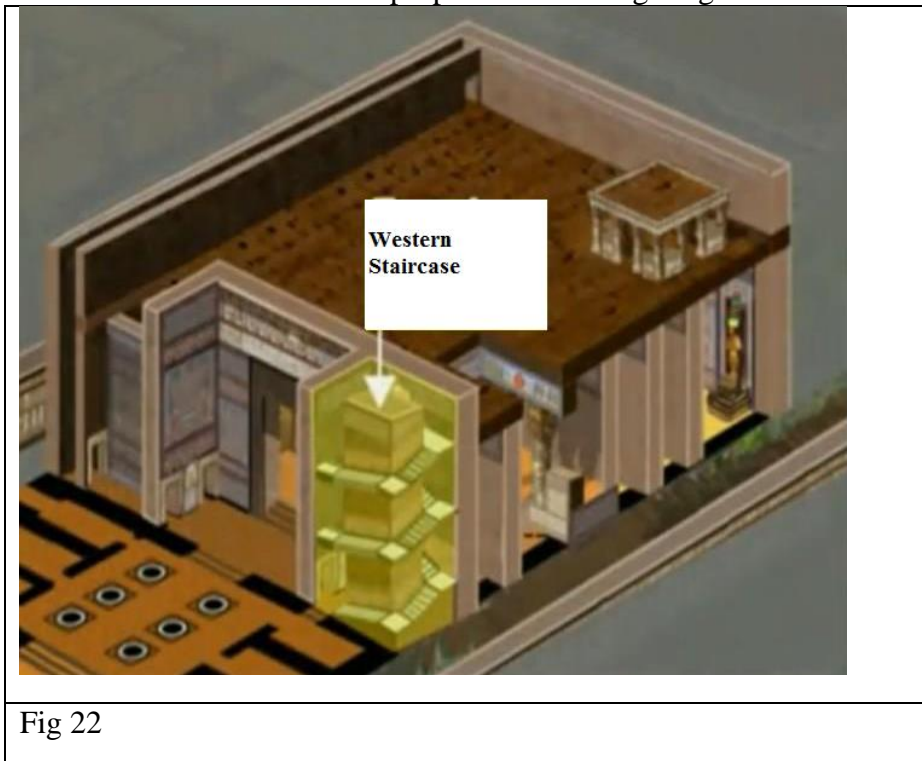


Fig 22

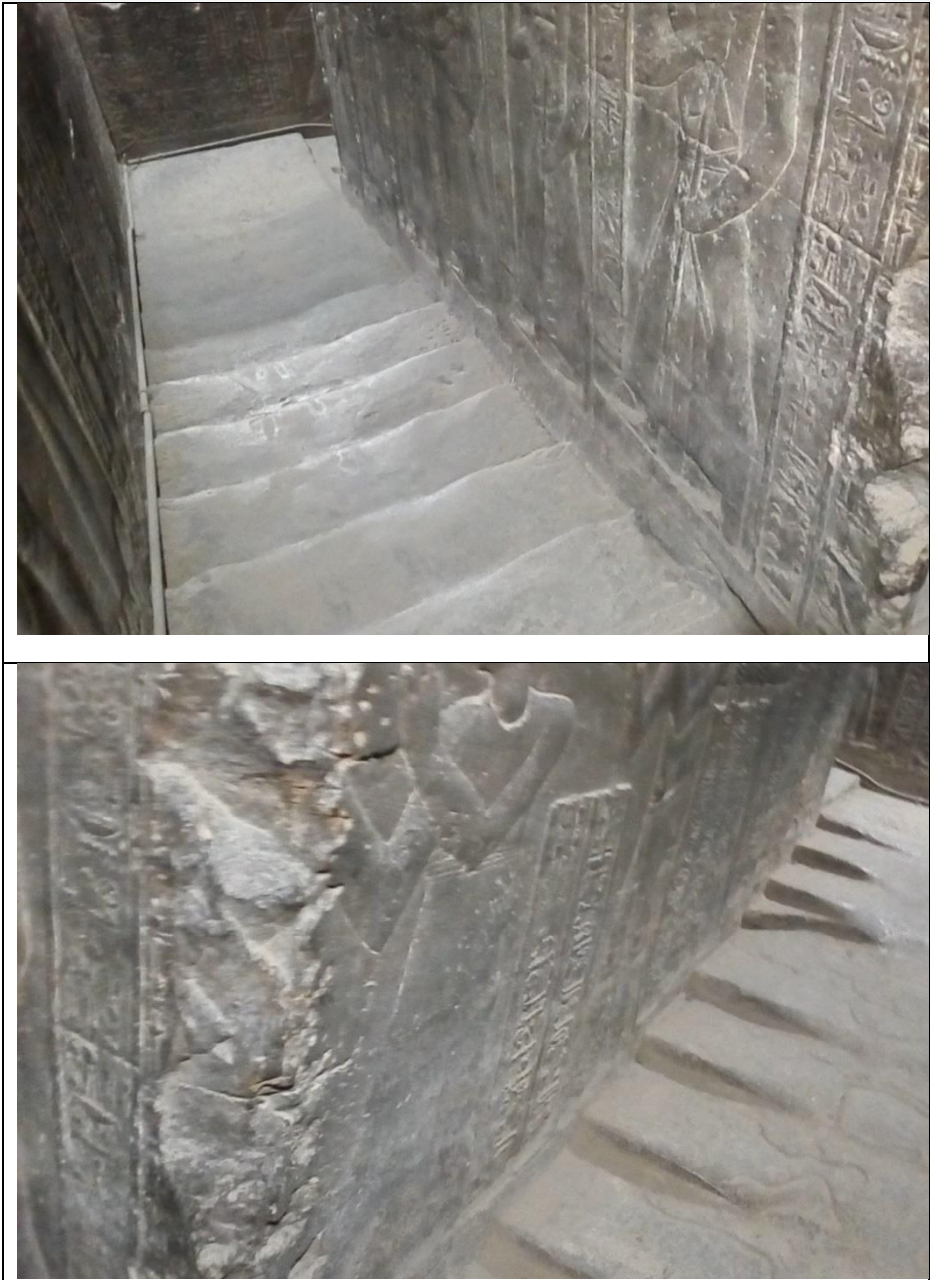


Fig 23

U-Shaped

Edfu Mammisi

In front of the Horus temple of edfu, to the west of the main temple, locates the Mammisi. The Mammisi has a staircase in the front of it, It is L-shaped contains 18 stairs, Due to the narrow space the riser is very high which makes this staircase in little bit hard to be ascend, it was made out of sandstone. One might wonder why this stair was built. Perhaps to give access to the lintel of the entrance.

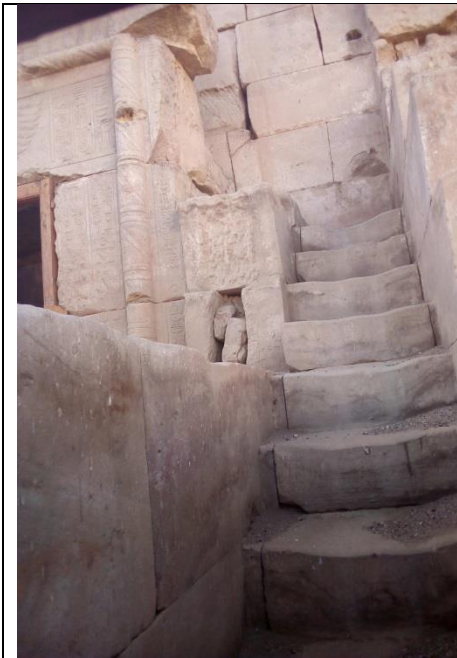
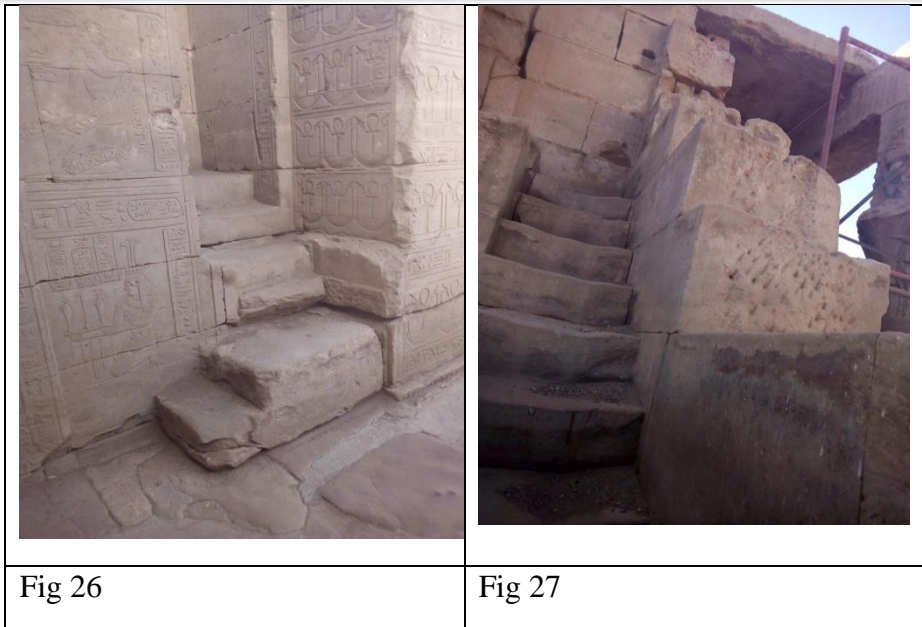


Fig 24



Fig 25



Spiral Staircase

Winding or spiral staircases were not common in Egyptian architecture, but the earliest significant example, possibly as early as the Nineteenth Dynasty (1307—1196 B.C.), is at the complex of temples at el Mahrraqa temple (Fig 13) at Deir el-Medina. Along the Nile, spiral staircases were often consinicted to form wells or Nilometers, to measure the height of the Nile. They first appear from circa 760 B.C and continue to be built into the Roman era. There is a fine example, the Nilometer of Kom Ombo.

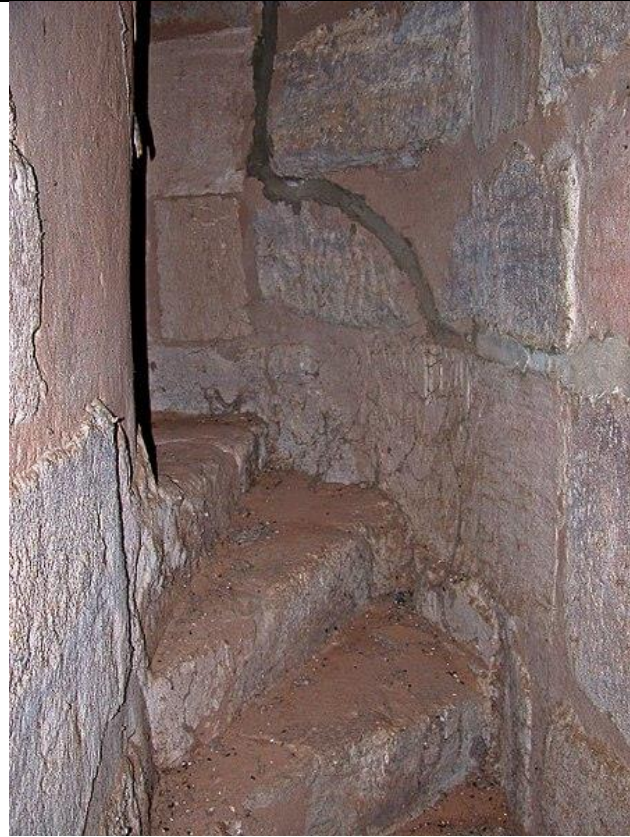


Fig 28

Kom Ombo Nilometer

It is located to the west of the Ptolemaic temple of Sobek and Horus. It is a big cylindrical well, encircled by a spherical staircase (Fig 29) till the bottom of the well with an opening with a small path to the water of the Nile. Beside it there is also a small well to the north, this small well lead the water to a small three-sided staircase basin. The small well was used for purification, the water was taken from the small well and stored in the basin.



Fig 29

Stepped Basins

Staircases could also form a basin. Here at Kom Ombo just beside the Nilometer, we found a stepped basin was used for purification purposes.

Purification basin of Kom Ombo

Purification basins were used primarily during embalming rites and probably for purification purposes to allow people to purify³⁵. Adjoining most of temples, there is a purification basin which contains the needed water for purification for rituals. Some of them include flights of stairs³⁶.

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The Requirements of Ritual Purity in Ancient Egypt, John Laurence Gee,³⁷
Doctorate thesis, Yale University, 1998

Prominently, the best example of them is the purification basin of Kom Ombo temple. The basin has three-sided steps each side consists of five steps built by laid blocks technique, the fourth side is a short wall higher than the upper step. One might guess that this basin was used to raise the eggs and small crocodile to choose the crocodile which would represent the deity crocodile but this opinion lacks a significant historical strong background. The basin was used to store water token from the nearside small well which also took water from the Nilometer.

Dendara Gate Basins

It was only roman times that the fountains were built in front of the door; these fountains supplied water to the villagers and allowed to be purified before entering the divine domain. the small basins placed between the fountains and the gate were used also for this purpose. Those small basins are very similar to Kom Ombo purification basins; they took stairs down with laid blocks technique made out of sandstone. The water suppliers by pipes drained into reservoirs located behind and above the niches mouths fitted with taps opened on a rectangular tub in line with these mouths wear marks made by the containers that the villagers held standing on a basement sidewalk.



Fig 30 Dendara Gate Basin



Fig 31 Kom Ombo Basin

Conclusion

Staircases held great importance in the ancient Egyptian life from the dynastic period till the graeco roman period. Due to the numerous vocabularies of the staircases we could abstract that there were a lot of types and specifications for each of those vocabularies. Most of those terms refer to the staircase in general but those could also hold another meaning directly and indirectly way. The term could also associate with deity or to resemble a particular form.

It worth to refer to the numerous types and form of those staircases that the Egyptian architecture showed in the graeco roman period would let to give a typology for them on the basis of geometrical layout designs, materials, locations and techniques. Furthermore, staircases held a great importance also in the architecture of building; therefor they integrated with most of the other architectural elements of the construction. As we could mention especially in the Graeco-Roman period when the staircases become a result for the high podium of the temple or to give access to the entrance.

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