

The Great Pyramid of Giza – A Monumental Construction for the Ancient Egyptians

Until the building of the Eiffel Tower in Paris in 1889, the Great Pyramid reigned supreme as the tallest building in the world

The area covered by the Great Pyramid – some 13 acres - could easily accommodate the Houses of Parliament and St Paul's Cathedral and still have room to spare. The cathedrals of Florence, Milan and St Peter's in Rome would also all fit comfortably inside.

The Great Pyramid is aligned with the four points of the compass with a near perfect precision. The average deviation of the sides from their alignment to north, south, east and west is a tiny fraction of a single degree - just 3 minutes 6 seconds.

The Story of Nakht - A Conscript's Tale

Pyramid tells the story of the Great Pyramid through the eyes of the men who built it. And of the many myths that surround the building of the Great Pyramid none is more difficult to eradicate than the belief that it was built by slaves. It was a rumour first put about by the Greek historian, Herodotus, over two thousand years ago and it was cemented in the popular imagination by films such as Cecil B De Mill's *Ten Commandments*. But slaves did not build the Great Pyramid, willing conscripts did, and *Pyramid* is the story of one of them.

Nakht is not a real historical figure, but every aspect of his life is based on real evidence: the journey he travels, the clothes he wears, the tasks he's assigned. Nakht is conscripted along with his brother Deba from a tiny village near Aswan in about 2,500 BC. The two of them sail up the Nile to work at Giza, the great desert plateau of limestone where the Great Pyramid still stands today.

"It's more than forty years since the King's men came for me. They brought me to a life I could never have imagined, to a task I've come to understand only now it is complete..."

They came for me in late summer, in the village where I was born - the only world I had ever known. 'In the name of the King, In the name of the King'. It was a shout I vaguely remembered. I had heard it as a tiny boy, when they had come for my grandfather. Now they had come for my brother - and for me... -

Timeline of Ancient Egypt

Late Predynastic Period

3100-2950 BC

Earliest known hieroglyphic writing

Foundation of the Egyptian state

Early Dynastic Period (1st-3rd Dynasties)

2950-2575 BC

Creation of the capital city of Memphis

Intensive contact with Palestine

The earliest form of pyramid is built – the Step Pyramid at Saqqara – by Djoser

Old Kingdom (4th-8th Dynasties)

2575-2150 BC

The Old Kingdom or the “Pyramid Age” heralds the golden age of Pyramid building

The first king of the 4th Dynasty, Sneferu, comes to power

Sneferu builds the two Pyramids at Dahshur –

Egyptian empire in Near East and Nubia

Elaborate tombs of the Valley of the Kings

Rule of woman pharaoh Hatshepsut

King Akhenaten attempts to introduce a monotheistic religion

Brief reign of Tutankhamun

Ramesses II rules for 67 years

3rd Intermediate Period (21st-25th Dynasties)

1075-715 BC

Disunity and Libyan settlement in Egypt

Nubians conquer Egypt (late 8th century)

Late Period (20th-30th Dynasties, 2nd Persian Period)

715-332 BC

Egypt conquered briefly by Assyrians

Cultural revival under kings from Sais

Persian conquest of Egypt (525 BC)

Egypt independent again (404-343 BC)

Greco-Roman Period (Macedonians, Ptolemies, and Romans)

332 BC-395 AD

Alexander the Great occupies Egypt

Alexander's general, Ptolemy, becomes king and founds a dynasty

The Rosetta Stone is carved (196 BC)

Cleopatra VII reigns (51-30 BC)

Egypt becomes a province of the Roman Empire (30 BC)

[Sources: bbc.co.uk/history; **Pyramid** by Kevin Jackson & Jonathan Stamp]

BBC Worldwide Book

Pyramid

By: Kevin Jackson & Jonathan Stamp

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The Great Pyramid of Khufu is the oldest of the Seven Wonders of the World and the only one still standing. No building on earth has inspired more speculation, and questions about its origins have exercised minds for more than 4,000 years.

In **Pyramid**, published by BBC Worldwide on October 10th 2002, authors Kevin Jackson and Jonathan Stamp explain how Egyptian builders, equipped with only the most basic tools, were able

to achieve an extraordinary degree of accuracy in its construction. How were stones weighing as much as 50 tons hauled into position so precisely? What was life like for the conscripted labourers who built it? How long did it take them to complete it? Only now can these questions be answered. Using state-of-the-art computer graphics, **Pyramid** brings the world of IVth Dynasty Egypt to life and reveals how and why this most extraordinary of human monuments was built. **Pyramid** also traces the history of the exploration of the Giza site and examines the origins of Egyptology. Finally, **Pyramid** looks at some of the less orthodox theories of pyramidologists and considers how the Great Pyramid has become a magnet for so many charlatans, heretics and cranks.

Containing more than 120 colour images, including 20 computer graphics, **Pyramid** accompanies the BBC One programme to be transmitted in October 2002.

For press review copies, interviews and further information, please contact Elaine Robertson on 07836 372465 or email: elainebusiness@hotmail.com

Production & Book Biographies

Jonathan Stamp is the producer of *Pyramid* and co-author of the accompanying BBC book. He is currently Director of Development for BBC History. His BBC credits include *Behind Bars*, a 6-part series about imprisonment, which won the Howard League Media Award; BBC Two's *Reputations* about Coco Chanel; several programmes for BBC Two's *Timewatch* including documentaries on Hannibal, the Spanish Inquisition and Kamikaze pilots. He was nominated for an Emmy as Best Director and also Best Writer for *Timewatch: Kamikaze*. Jonathan has won two Emmies for *Allied to the Mafia* and *The True Story of the Roman Arena* – as well as Special Jury Prizes at New York and San Francisco Film Festivals for the same films. He has also received an Amnesty International Special Jury Award for *On Behalf of the State* – a film about capital punishment in Britain.

Laurence Rees is the executive producer of *Pyramid* and Creative Director, BBC History. In 1994, he launched *Reputations*, the BBC's historical biographical strand, and is currently editor of *Timewatch*, for which he has won three Emmy Awards. Laurence has a raft of acclaimed history productions to his name, including the six part series for BBC Two, *The Nazis - A Warning From History*, which won him a BAFTA award in 1998. In a lighter vein, he produced *Clive James' Postcards* (Rio and Paris) and was executive producer for the award winning series *The Crusades* with Terry Jones.

Laurence has authored several books including; a novel, *Electric Beach* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson), *Selling Politics* (BBC Books) and BBC companion books for his series *The Nazis - A Warning From History* and *War Of The Century*.

John Romer is a contributor. He is a renowned Egyptologist who has dedicated over 35 years to the study and conservation of Egypt's archaeological sites. After several epigraphic and archaeological surveys for the University of Chicago in Luxor and the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo, Romer became the Field Director of The Brooklyn Museum's Theban Expedition in 1977. He conducted physical surveys and conservation work at Luxor, Egypt and directed the excavation of the tomb of Ramesses XI in the Valley of the Kings. In 1992 at the request of the Egyptian Organisation of Antiquities he convened a multinational

committee to advise and recommend projects and procedures for the conservation of the Valley of the Kings at Thebes.

Romer is also a popular author and television presenter. His television films have won various awards and their accompanying books have often reached the best-seller list.

His TV work includes *Romer's Egypt: An Introduction To Ancient Egypt*, BBC Television (1981) and *Great Excavations: John Romer's History of Archaeology*, Channel 4 (2000).

Kevin Jackson is co-author of the book. He is a freelance writer, broadcaster and film-maker, whose recent publications include *Invisible Forms*, *The Language of Cinema* and *The Oxford Book of Money*. His work for the BBC includes films on Anthony Burgess, George Eliot and William Morris for television and documentaries on William Blake and John Ruskin for radio. A former Associate Arts Editor of the *Independent*, for which he continues to write, he has also contributed to *The Sunday Times*, *Sight and Sound* and the *New Yorker*. He is currently working on a biography of the English film director Humphrey Jennings.

The Mill

The Mill was founded in 1990 by a group of people including CEO Robin Shenfield, and managing director Pat Joseph. Over the last twelve years The Mill has grown into a group of companies providing a unique range of technology-based creative facilities for the entertainment and advertising industries, ranging from model making, camera operation to sophisticated visual effects in high-end commercials, television and feature film.

Mill Film was founded in 1997 to bring The Mill's expertise in visual effects into the realm of feature film and in 2001 was awarded the highest accolade in filmmaking, the Academy Award Oscar for visual effects in Ridley Scott's, *Gladiator*. K3lyb, GI Tw 47dentaects in the gootCe film93