



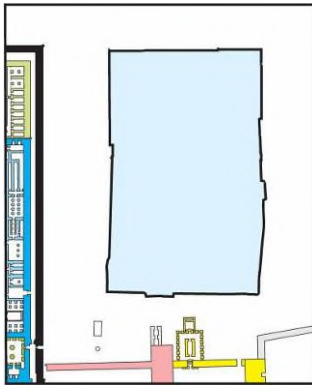
Here the king (in the middle) stands before the fertility god Min (to the right). No explicatory text here, but there is no need for one, either. This gift speaks for itself.



It is a wooden framework with the bodies of killed enemies - like bundles of hay on a rickstand.



5. The Sacred Lake



Every Egyptian temple had a “sacred lake”. Alongside its borders were shrubs, trees and flowers: this was first of all a pleasure garden for the god, a place where he could relax in the privacy of his own estate - as any well-to-do Egyptian could. At certain occasions he even went boating here, in his sacred bark (in this case in a full sized boat: not the portable model boat of processions.)

There were however also plants here that produced provisions for the temple cult, such as oil and myrrh. Next to the lake there could be poultry farms, rearing ducks and geese for the god's offering tables. But most important of all: the lake supplied the clean water, needed for the many purification rites of the daily temple ritual.⁷



The massive pylon to the left is the 8th, of the secondary axis. Towards the middle is, in the background, the 1st pylon.

⁷ Bonnet 694-5.



This is a view along most of the primary axis. To the far left is the 1st pylon, to the far right - just beyond the border of the picture - is the Bark Shrine.

In the middle of the picture we can see the upper part of some columns of the Great Hypostyle. To the right of this comes the obelisk of Thutmose I (20 meters high). Further to the right is the much higher obelisk of Hatshepsut: 30 meters high. Both are of red granite from the Aswan area.



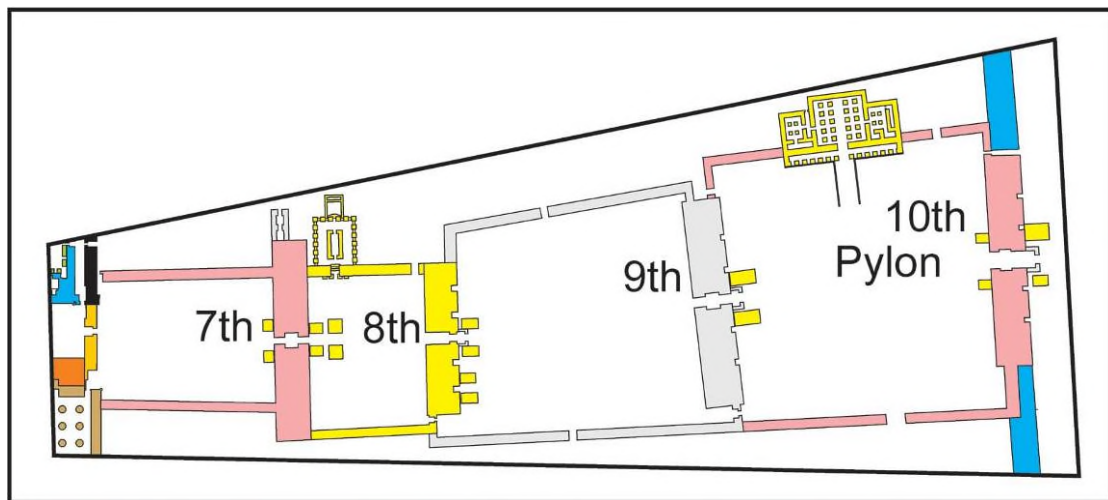
Close to the border of the sacred lake is this granite image of a dung beetle, placed on a short, stubby granite pillar.



Dung beetles push and roll balls of dung, as big as they are themselves, in front of them, towards their nest. At some point, the Egyptians saw in this an image of the sun, being rolled along the sky. As a result, the dung beetle became a symbol for the rising sun. That is why this granite beetle looks east, towards to rising sun.



6. The Secondary Axis



The origin of the secondary axis is a procession way that ran from the temple of Amun to the nearby temple of Mut, and to the slightly more distant Luxor temple. This route was the scene for grandiose processions, among which the most important of all: that of the Opet Festival.

The road between Luxor and Karnak (2.5 km long) was in its entirety donned with a double row of stone sphinxes. Their original number is now estimated at 2 times 365 pieces: a pair of sphinxes for every 7 meters.⁸

The part of the procession way closest to the Amun temple was gradually fitted with a series of ornate entrance gates, further embellished with obelisks, flag poles and colossal statues. These are the 7th till 10th pylon.

⁸ Arnold 114-5.

6.1. The 7th pylon



Of the 7th pylon, not much still stands today, but this fine relief has survived virtually intact. With his left hand, the king holds a huge number of enemies by their hair: they hold up their hands in a beseeching gesture. But to no avail: in his right hand the king holds a mace (its head just visible at the top of the relief, behind the king's crown), with which he is about to smash their heads.

(On either side of the relief is a vertical groove. In these stood, on a pedestal, wooden flag poles.)



This scene is regularly depicted on the outside surfaces of pylons. Because of its high degree of stylizing, we might assume it to be a symbolic picture, designed as a magically effective deterrent against Egypt's enemies. There are however good grounds for assuming this to be the representation of a ritual, transpiring regularly in front of the temples, for all to see.

The caption reads: "Slaying the Great Ones (the chiefs) of Retenu (a region in modern Syria)".

6.2. The 8th pylon



The mighty 8th pylon still offers a fair image of how these buildings once looked. The pylon itself is a mountain of stone - but a tamed mountain: chamfered and polished, and donned with huge reliefs.

