

UNCOVERING THE Lost Tomb of Osiris



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MYSTERY

by *Ray Grasse*

I was just 12 years old when I grabbed a shovel from my father's tool collection and began digging a hole in the family backyard. That wasn't just because the thought of digging a hole appealed to me, although that was true, too. It was because I was inspired by the fantasy of a long-distant past, and secret hopes of uncovering lost artifacts from the Native American tribes that once roamed my neighborhood, or perhaps even fossils from the dinosaur era. When my mother strolled out hours later and found me at the bottom of a seven-foot hole, she was horrified and ordered me out immediately, fearful that I might suffocate if those damp walls were to collapse on me. Well, she did have a point.

I've often wondered if our childhood obsessions didn't harbor the seeds of our later interests and ambitions during adulthood. That fascination with the past and "digging deeper" certainly seemed

to portend my own, and among other things led to an amateur interest in any and all things related to paleontology, archaeology, and most of all, Egypt. That curiosity lingered well into my adult years and led to a series of unusual experiences I'd eventually have in that extraordinary land. What I'd like to do here is describe one such event that took place in 1997 involving a little-known chamber deep underground on the Giza Plateau that's since been the source of considerable speculation, but also considerable misinformation.

JOHN ANTHONY WEST AND FRIENDS

But to do that I first need to set the stage by mentioning that throughout the 1990s I worked on the editorial staff of the Theosophical Society in America, located in Wheaton, Illinois. During that time I came to know an independent researcher and lecturer by the name of John Anthony West, who had published a provocative book titled *Serpent in the Sky: The High Wisdom of Ancient Egypt*. I first read his book in the mid-1980s, and was captivated by its theories, which explored the "symbolist" theory of Egypt first articulated by the writer Schwaller de Lubicz (1887-1961). In a series of books and essays, de Lubicz suggested that ancient Egypt possessed a far greater degree of wisdom than generally acknowledged by modern-day academics, and that was subtly encoded in the symbolism of its monuments, architecture, and hidden geometries. One of my duties working for the Society was that of acquisitions editor, so when I discovered that John's book had gone out of print I asked him about acquiring the rights for a reprint, and thus it was Quest Books released a new and updated version of his book.

It was through John that I came to know a Boston geologist by the name of Robert Schoch, as well as an old friend of John's, Boris Said. During this general period the three of them joined forces



John Anthony West (Photo © Ray Grasse)

(along with director Bill Cote) to produce a TV special for NBC called *Mystery of the Sphinx*. First broadcast in 1993, it was hosted by actor Charlton Heston and argued that the Great Sphinx of Egypt might be thousands of years older than commonly dated, as suggested by the unique weathering patterns along its body and the surrounding enclosure.

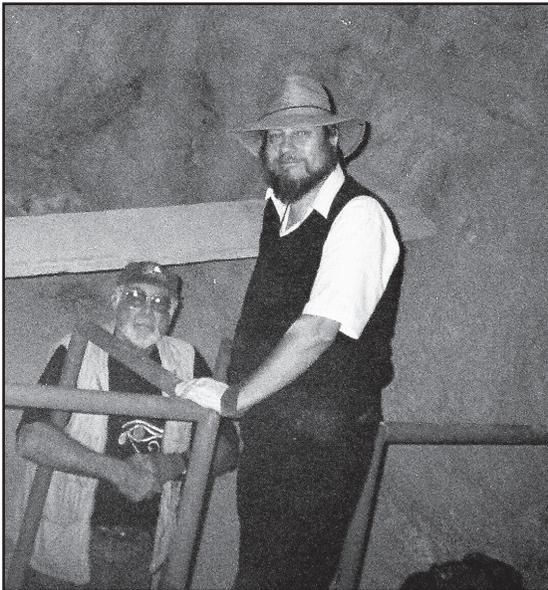
The special also explained how ground penetrating radar technology they employed on the Giza Plateau indicated there may indeed be a hidden chamber underneath one of the Sphinx's paws, just as predicted by the famed "sleeping prophet," Edgar Cayce, decades earlier. In addition to performing well in the ratings, the show went on to win two Emmys, and triggered debates on the pages of academic journals for years to come.

John's star was definitely on the rise.

Though I kept in close touch with West over the coming years, I began communicating with his partner Boris as well. Or perhaps I should say *ex-partner*, since they had a falling out over a dispute concerning their NBC special. As Hemingway-esque a character as

any I've met, Boris lived a life of high adventure, including race car driving and two stints in the Olympics as the head of a bobsled team. He had known John since childhood, but now things had taken a very bad turn – and it all seemed to be over money. Not being privy to the intimate details of that dispute, I can't pass judgment on it one way or another, and leave it for others to make up their own minds about who did what, when, and how.

It was during one phone conversation with Boris in 1996 that I first learned about an intriguing development taking shape in Egypt that he clearly seemed excited about. He described an expedition to Cairo that was being organized along with members of the Edgar Cayce foundation, the A.R.E. (Association for Research and Enlightenment), as well as a mystically-inclined scientist named Dr. James ("J.J.") Hurtak. I knew of Hurtak and his work before, chiefly in connection with a book he'd written in 1973 titled *Forbidden Knowledge: Keys of Enoch*. It was a mysterious but hefty



Boris Said (left) and J.J. Hurtak (right) (Photo © Ray Grasse)

volume that somehow managed to sell over 100,000 copies without any advertising at all, which is no small feat. The purpose of this upcoming expedition would be to explore and film a mysterious chamber roughly 100 feet underground on the Giza Plateau, located several hundred yards behind the Sphinx. It had never been fully investigated before due to the high water levels inside, but now those levels were receding, thus making it more accessible to researchers.

Said had known about this spot on the Plateau for several years already, but at the urging of Hurtak, Boris grew increasingly convinced they would find something important in that spot. As a result, Boris enlisted the involvement of the Edgar Cayce group, and the expedition would be largely bankrolled by a wealthy member of that organization, Dr. Joseph Schor. According to Boris, it was set to take place in February of 1997, and he asked if I'd like to come along and observe the proceedings in a journalistic capacity. It was an offer I couldn't refuse.

PASSAGE TO EGYPT

Upon arriving in Cairo that first night, I made some calls and arranged to meet a few of the other team members near the front entrance of the Mena House, a posh hotel in the grand colonial style just a stone's throw from the pyramids. As night fell across the Plateau, a small van pulled up to the curb with Boris and Hurtak inside, along with their wives. After some cursory introductions, we headed over to the Great Pyramid where we found others from the team already waiting for us. The gathering on this first night was intended to inaugurate the expedition on an auspicious note.

The sense of anticipation amongst all the team members was electric. We made our way in through the pyramid's entrance and up the long "Grand Gallery," and finally into the King's Chamber. Once we all settled into our spots against the outer walls, Hurtak then led the group through a three-hour spoken ceremony, with his voice and

language taking on near-Biblical inflections at times. The litany of topics he covered included the seventy-six names of the Pharaohs, the Nile journey as a symbolic voyage of the soul, an invocation of blessings from the disembodied Pharaohs, the significance of the three stars in the belt of Orion, and the unique sonic properties of this room. There was more: he alluded to the Hall of Records, the importance of the missing pyramid capstone, and the Kabbalistic relationship between the four-lettered name of God and the four corners of the pyramid's base. James casts a very wide net, that was obvious.

With that portion of the ceremony finished, each team member took turns lying inside the sarcophagus for a few moments, while Hurtak and I helped them climb into and out of it safely. By the time the formal ceremony was over, most of the team members were exhausted, some of that due simply to jet lag from the long flight over, while a few others seemed deeply moved by Hurtak's ceremony. Glancing at Boris, I saw tears running down his cheeks,



The vicinity of the well-shaft leading to the “Tomb of Osiris” on the Giza Plateau. The entrance to the underground shaft is on the right, directly in front of the three seated figures, the Great Pyramid is in the background. (Photo © Ray Grasse)

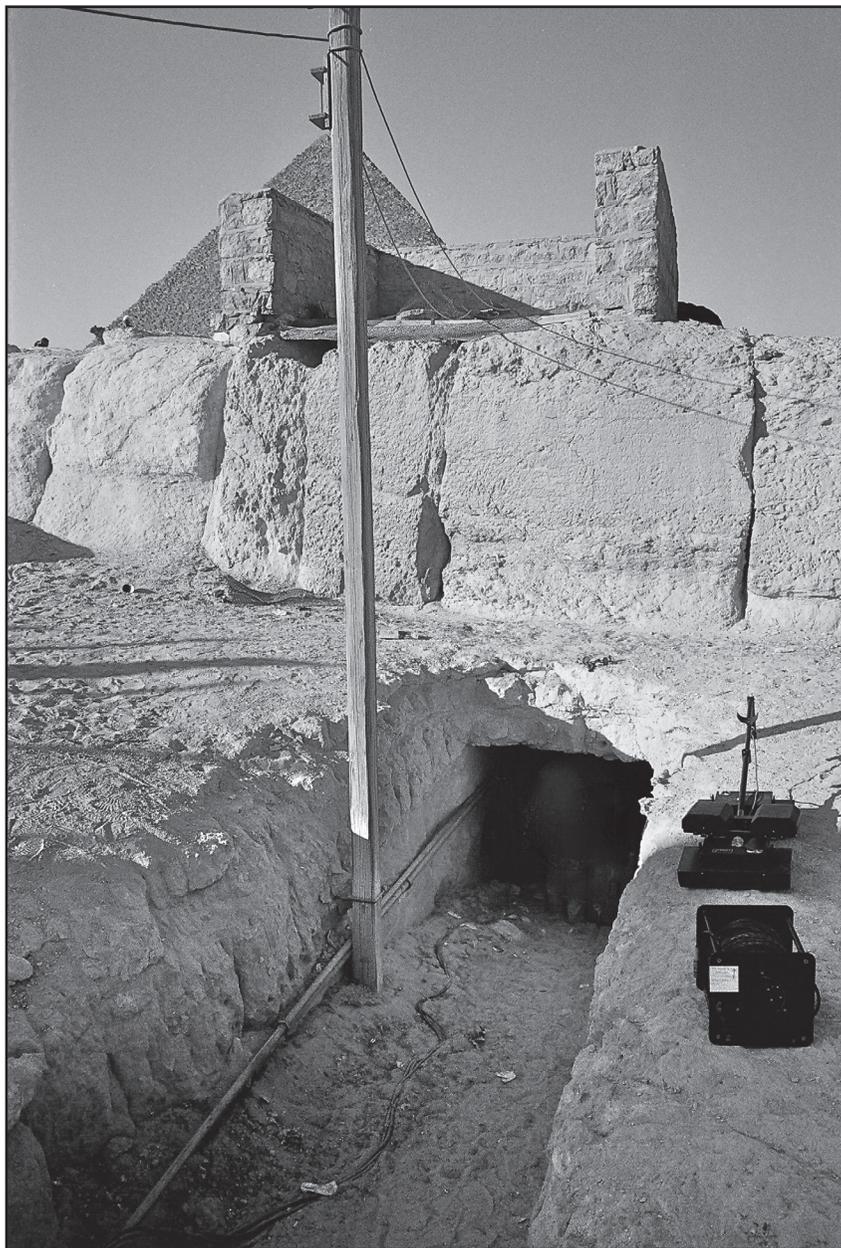
and asked what he was feeling. He said Hurtak's ceremony touched a deep chord for him, though he couldn't articulate why. I found it fascinating, too, but was grappling with such intense back pain from the hard surfaces we'd been sitting for three hours on that I looked forward to returning to my motel room and the comfort of a soft bed.

OLD AND NEW

Early the next morning, the investigation began in earnest. “Well, here goes nothing,” Boris quipped as we set out before dawn toward the Plateau in his van. The early morning skies around the Plateau exude a quality of clarity and peace quite unlike anything I've experienced anywhere else. Our vehicle was waved past the checkpoint leading to the pyramids, as we drove carefully towards the site where we'd establish our base of operations for the day.

Members of the film crew hauled their elaborate equipment down the steep metal ladder in the well-shaft, while the rest of us milled around up on top, trying our best to find shade as the temperature soared to 100°F. The conversations amongst the team members pivoted around the pressing questions of the day. Was the chamber below simply a natural cavity, as some believed? Or was it an ancient ceremonial room that fell into disrepair? Or might this even be an “anteroom” which connected to another, more important chamber – an ancient library, perhaps? More than one team member was hoping for that possibility.

At one point during the afternoon Egyptologist Mark Lehner came by to check out our group. I'd met him once before, at a conference in Chicago put on in 1992 by the AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science), where he and Robert Schoch debated the true age of the Sphinx. At the time, Lehner was probably the most prominent critic of West and Schoch's theories



A close-up of the entrance to the “Tomb of Osiris” shaft, which tunnels under the Khephren Causeway. (Photo © Ray Grasse)

about the Sphinx, and he’d obviously gotten word of our group’s presence on the Plateau that day.

Nodding towards the entrance of the shaft, he remarked to a couple of us standing around, in a noticeably teasing way, “So...have you found the Hall of Records down there yet?” (This was in reference to the fabled treasure trove of knowledge theorized by Edgar Cayce).

Though I didn’t say anything about it at the time, there was no small irony in his comment. That’s because just one year earlier I’d been looking through a neighborhood library and came across a thin volume titled *Egyptian Heritage*, which was a sympathetic treatment of Edgar Cayce’s writings on Atlantis, Egypt, and the Hall of Records. The author of the book? None other than Mark Lehner himself – the self-professed skeptic of all fringe theories associated with Egypt. He had apparently started out an avid student of Cayce’s theories, but during the course of his academic studies underwent a conversion to a more conservative and evidence-based view of ancient Egypt. Or that’s how it appeared in public, anyway; who knows what views he still privately entertained.

Because of that past affiliation with the Edgar Cayce foundation, Mark remained friends with Joseph Schor and his colleague Joe Jahoda through the years. After he walked away from our group, I heard Jahoda say that Mark had climbed down to the bottom of the well-shaft as early as the 1970s, and suspected even then it might hold some real importance. Why, I wondered? “Because of its proximity to the pyramids,” Jahoda explained. “It implied to Mark it must have been exceedingly important to the ancient Egyptians. But the water table was too high back in the 70s for him or anyone else to do any further investigation of it.”

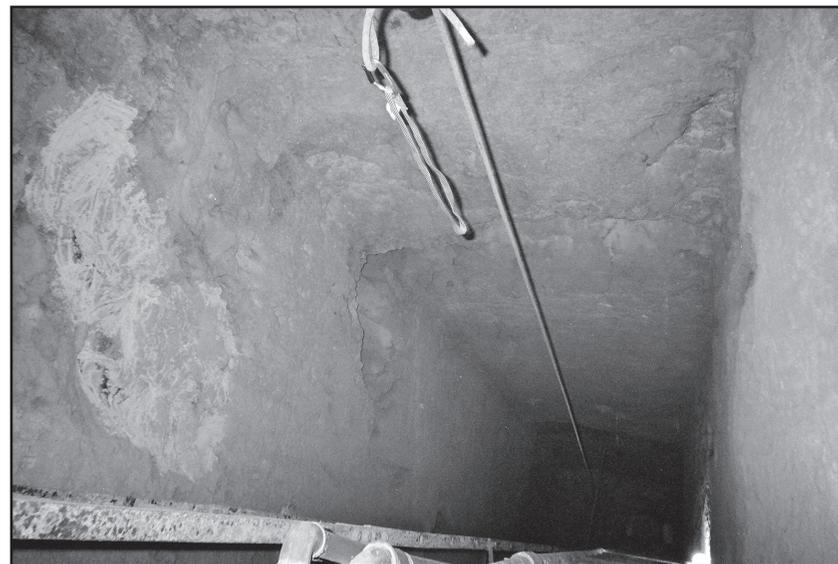
That first day was a long one, extending well past sunset, as Boris and some of the others lumbered back up the ladder beneath the cobalt sky. As I helped him carry some of his gear back to the van parked several yards away, I was taken aback by the startling sight of green laser beams darting across the plateau around us,

creating stunning designs across both the ground and the face of the pyramid behind us. I quickly realized that a sound-and-light show was being staged further down the Plateau for tourists who came here for an educational show about the history of the region; we just happened to be in the line of fire. It made for an anachronistic blend of past and future, with ancient history melding with space-age technology. Yet strangely enough, it all seemed perfectly fitting somehow.

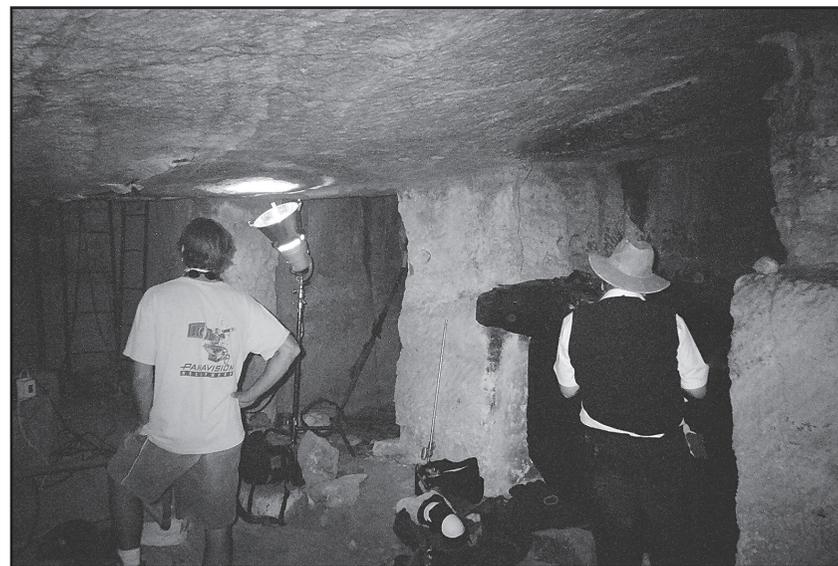
THE DISCOVERY

It was sometime over the course of February 18th that the expedition's cameraman, Garrett, made the initial find. He was down in the chamber positioning the tripod for his movie camera when he suddenly realized he was standing on a stone slab of some kind. Clearing away the dirt, it became obvious this wasn't any ordinary rock, since it looked too smooth, too polished. Word quickly percolated back up to the crew members on top, and before long rumors began circulating as to what this might be.

Later that day while everyone was away on break, I climbed down the rusty metal ladder bolted into the sides of the narrow shaft to see what was down there for myself. The shaft is staggered into three distinct levels, I saw. The first level opened out into a relatively small space that was littered with debris, and seemed to be of no obvious significance. From there, the shaft presents a sheer vertical drop of about 70 feet, and the old ladder felt precarious at points. But the descent was exhilarating, too, since I felt as though each step down was transporting me back further in time, to an era and culture thousands of years older than my own. For a split second, my mind flashed back to those feelings I had as a child digging that hole in my parent's backyard, looking for remnants of a forgotten past, almost as if something was coming full circle.



Looking down the shaft, from the first level to the second. (Photo © Ray Grasse)



On the second level of the shaft, with one of two empty sarcophagi visible. The team's cinematographer is on the left, J.J. Hurtak is on the right. (Photo © Ray Grasse)

On the second level is a chamber with seven niches or “cubicles” carved into the rock walls, two of which contained large sarcophagi made of heavy stone. One of those is solid black and surprisingly smooth, almost as if it had been constructed using modern engineering tools. The other one looked rougher and grayish in color. Each of these two sarcophagi is well over 20 tons, I’m told. It boggles the mind trying to imagine how the ancients could have moved these massive objects down into this spot, especially considering there are no signs of damage on the walls of the shaft. Fascinating as all this was, I was anxious to see what was further down the shaft, so I carefully made my way down the ladder to the shaft’s bottom, roughly a 30-foot drop.

At first glance, the lowest room almost looked like a rectangular cavern. I was struck by the sense of profound antiquity that permeated it. Some of that was obviously due to the fact that, unlike so many popular tourist sites in this country, it was completely unrestored.



Looking out towards the northwest corner of the lowest chamber in the shaft, with the remains of one of four pillars visible in the middle, and the watery moat along its fringes.

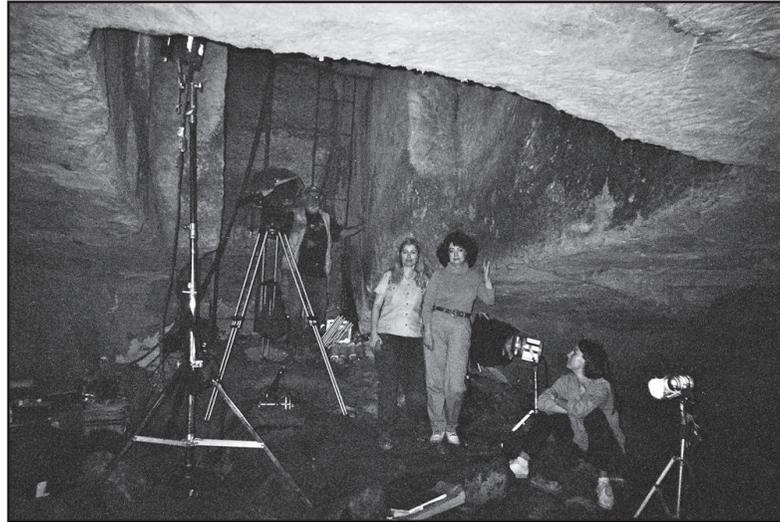
(Photo © Ray Grasse)

The air in the chamber was thick and musty, almost suffocating. There was something slightly spooky about it, too, not just because of its ruinous state but the sight of human bones protruding from the muddy water along its edges. That was unsettling in a way, as if I’d intruded onto someone’s final resting place. I couldn’t help but wonder if there might be something to those legends about curses against trespassers to these ancient sites, so just to play it safe I offered up a few silent protective prayers before venturing in further.

I could see that the chamber was completely flooded along its outer rim on three sides, and that I was standing on a sort of island extending out from the shaft’s entrance. At the far end of this quasi-island I noticed the broken remains of two large pillars, both of them square and truncated. To me, the room had more the vague feel of an archaic temple than a conventional crypt.

And there, right before me, amidst the rocks and the mud, I could see the smooth stone surface the others had spoken about, roughly one square foot in size and just a few yards from the entrance into the chamber. It wasn’t obvious whether or not this was man-made, but to my untrained eye it seemed too smooth to be natural, as if hinting at something larger underneath.

Theories were abundant amongst the team members up top as to what this might be. Some suspected it was the surface of a sarcophagus, while a few others thought it could indicate a passageway to yet another chamber – perhaps even the legendary Hall of Records itself? Unfortunately the team only had a filming permit, not an archaeological one, so we weren’t allowed to disturb anything in the chamber. Just to make sure our curiosity didn’t get the better of us, the Egyptians posted an observer to accompany us the entire time, who watched our every move. Considering how much thievery and damage often takes place at many of these sites, I could understand that. But it was frustrating, too, since we knew that removing even a small amount of dirt from around that slab might reveal what it was, or what lay beneath it.

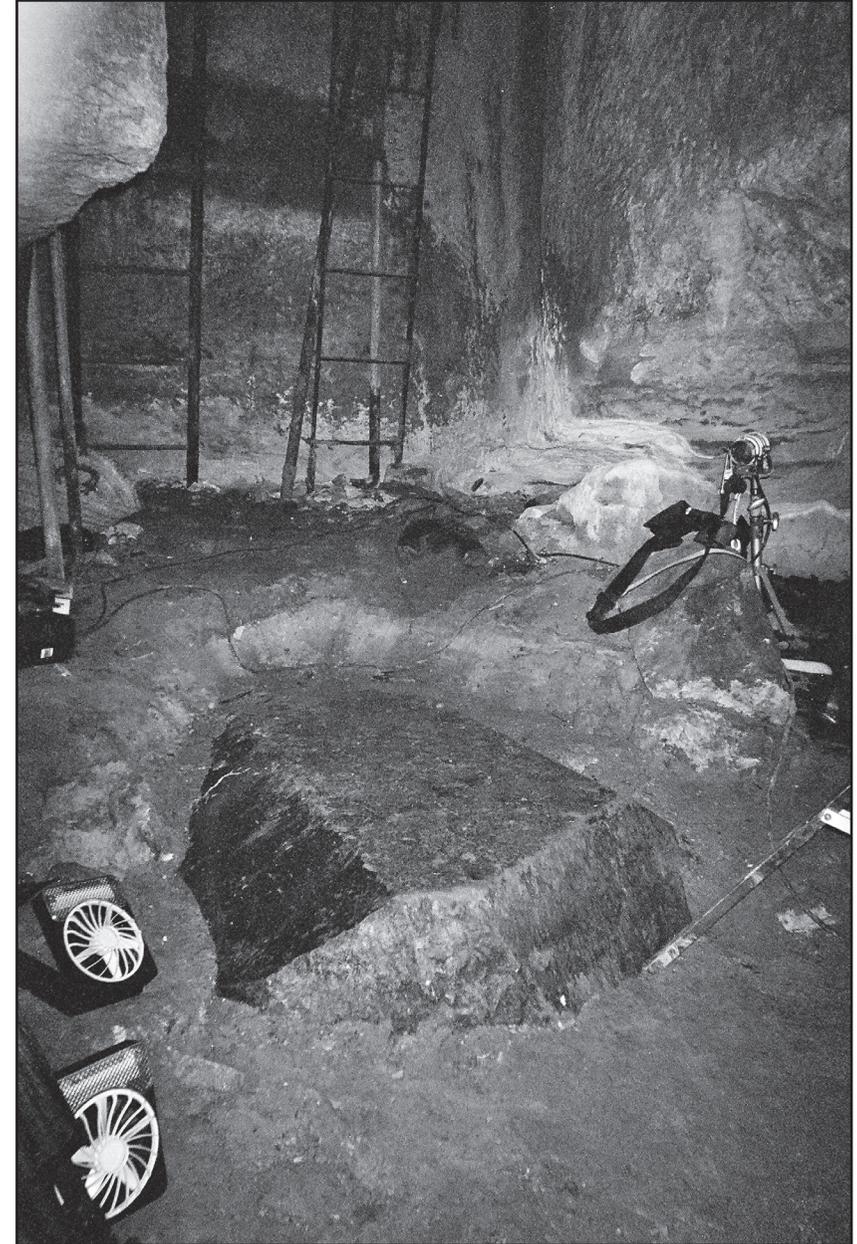


Facing the east end of the 'Tomb of Osiris'. From left: Boris (in back, next to the ladder); Desiree Hurtak, Carol Pate, and an unidentified film crew member. The location of the partially submerged slab was found beneath the large tripod slightly left of center here.

(Photo © Ray Grasse)

This was all about to change, however.

The next day while I was down in the chamber with Boris, Hurtak, and a couple members of the film crew, the Egyptian assigned to watch us unexpectedly climbed back up the ladder to take a bathroom break. Those of us still in the chamber all looked at each other as if reading one another's minds – then piled onto the ground to quickly (and carefully) use our fingers to scrape away as much dirt from around the stone slab as possible. We knew full well this was outside the bounds of official protocol, but we also realized this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and were determined not to damage anything in the process. Over those next few minutes it quickly became apparent this stone slab must have been carved by human hands, and wasn't simply a natural feature. We were excited, but also mystified. What were we looking at, exactly?



The mysterious slab on the floor of the chamber after several of the team members and myself used our fingers to remove several inches of dirt and mud. (Photo © Ray Grasse)

Word about the exposed slab spread quickly amongst the team members above, and the next day Thomas Dobecki (the team's technical expert) and his two helpers hauled their ground-penetrating radar equipment down into the chamber for a closer look. Scanning the dirt floor of the chamber with his equipment, he detected what appeared to be a hollow space just beneath the slab. He said the stone itself seemed to be about thirty inches thick, and beneath that appeared to be a possible tunnel descending in an easterly direction towards the Sphinx. That ignited everyone's imagination further, since it might indicate a passageway, a hidden chamber, or at the very least, a previously unknown sarcophagus. Boris in particular was banking on the possibility of a secret passageway extending down and out from this room. Was it a tunnel? Or simply an empty space indicating a submerged sarcophagus? Whatever it was, anticipation was growing amongst the team members as to what be in store for us.

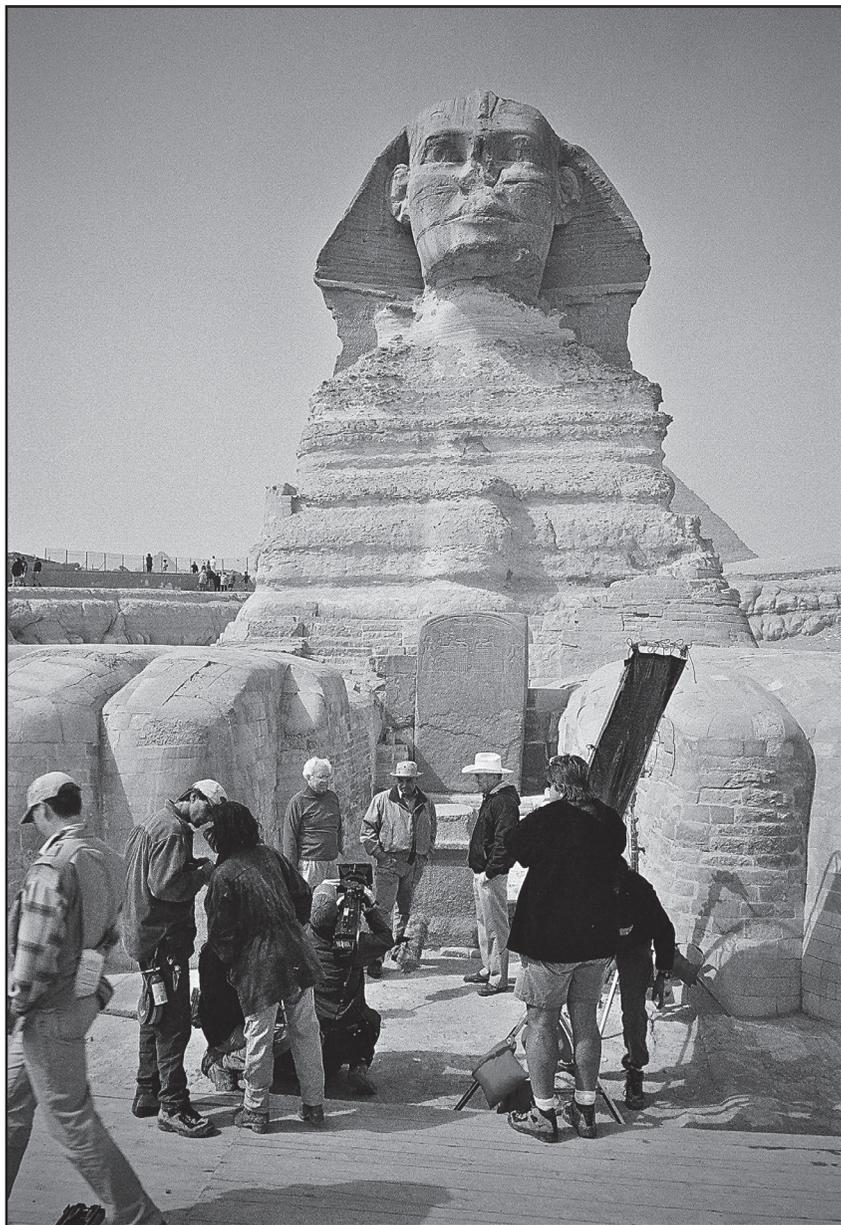
THE TIDE TURNS

When Egyptian officials caught wind of what we'd uncovered down below, the whole mood of the expedition changed dramatically. I now saw local officials whispering to one another off to the sides, obviously trying to figure out what to do about this unexpected turn of events. Boris and Joseph Schor tried to play down what had been found while talking with Plateau officials, and began negotiating just how much more research or filming would be allowed from that point on. Boris in particular was anxious to obtain permission for exploring the underground chamber further – especially beneath the mysterious stone slab. But Boris and Joseph now seem blocked at every turn, as the rest of the group began growing restless. It was clear the officials in charge suspected this could turn out to be something important, and did not want to lose control of the situation.

It was a couple of mornings after the initial discovery that I arrived on site to find the film crew busy setting up for an interview with Zahi Hawass, which was planned to take place directly in front of the Sphinx. Several minutes later Hawass himself arrived on the scene. Next to the president of Egypt, he was probably the most well-known figure in Egypt. But he could be a world-class ham, too. For years if you turned on any TV show about Egypt you invariably saw Zahi's face front and center. I always had the feeling Zahi could sniff a camera from a mile away, maybe even 1000 miles. It was well-known that his ambitious streak made him more than a few enemies over the years, both inside and out of Egypt. Boris himself seemed to drift into that category over the years, wavering between warm friendship and ice-cold animosity towards the man.

Yet every time I began to feel like Zahi might be too self-serving for his own good, I'd hear some story which portrayed him in a more favorable light. Like the anecdote my friend Rosemary Clark told about the first time she traveled to Egypt and approached Zahi about spending a night inside the Great Pyramid – this, before it became the fashionable thing to do among New Age seekers. Impressed by her sincerity, he immediately arranged for her to spend the night there alone, undisturbed by guards or other visitors. And when she offered to pay him for his help, he steadfastly refused. As anyone familiar with Egypt knows, finding an official in this country who refused money is a rare thing indeed, and suggests to me there may be a spiritual sensibility lurking beneath all that bluster and bombast.

My own fleeting interactions with Zahi were pleasant enough, but I was curious to know more about the man. Like Mark Lehner, Zahi was a vocal critic of all "fringe" theories about the Giza Plateau; his famously derisive term for proponents of such theories was pyramidiot. Yet interestingly, like Lehner, he allegedly started out as an avid student of Edgar Cayce's writings! So when I saw Joe Jahoda standing off to the side waiting for their interview to start,



Preparing to film an interview with Zahi Hawass in front of the Sphinx. Zahi is in the center, Joseph Schor is to the right of him (in white cowboy hat), Joe Jahoda is to the left, without hat. (Photo © Ray Grasse)

I asked him for his honest opinion of the man, since they'd been friends for decades by that point. Joe proceeded to tell me how he and his colleagues at the A.R.E. helped put Zahi through college back at the University of Pennsylvania years earlier. He spoke with obvious affection for Zahi, citing the difficulties he faced in America as a foreign student on his arrival. "People don't realize how tough it was for him when he came to America. He barely spoke any English at all, yet he managed to make his way through school."

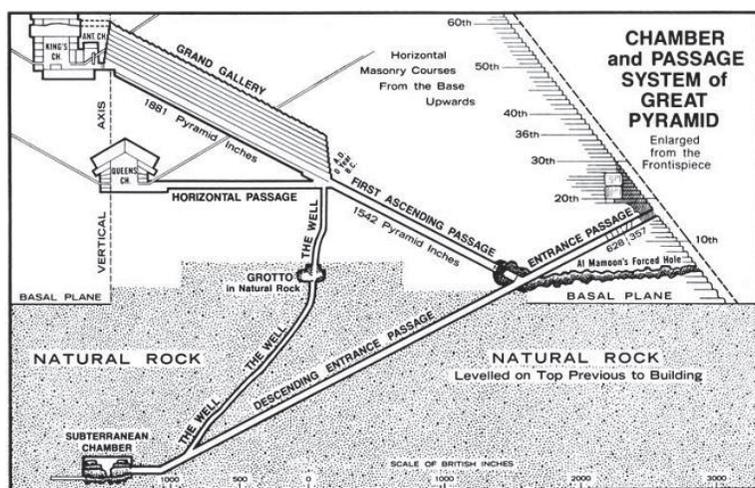
BENEATH THE PYRAMID

Over the next few days negotiations with the local officials dragged on, so Boris decided to use his extra time to finish up some other projects. One of those involved taking the film crew over to shoot some extraneous scenes in the King's Chamber inside the Great Pyramid. But as commonly happens with film projects, this one proceeded at a snail's pace, so I took the opportunity to explore other parts of the pyramid on my own.

This massive structure is an engineering marvel, but also a great mystery on a number of fronts. Aside from the lingering question as to how it was built or how long that really took, there is the problem of its true antiquity. In the 1980s a researcher from the University of Washington, Robert Wenke, carbon-dated samples of mortar obtained from the pyramid which contained wood, charcoal and reed, and yielded the surprising result that it was several hundred years older than previously believed. Later testing conducted by Robert Temple, using a different method, corroborated those results (we'll come back to that later). Findings like those are especially perplexing since they seem to place the construction of the Great Pyramid near the very dawn of Egyptian civilization, long before it's generally believed they had either the knowledge or social organization to accomplish such a feat.

After carefully examining the so-called “Grand Gallery” which cuts at an angle up through the pyramid, I decided to search out the subterranean pit beneath its foundation, which is accessible via a narrow slanted passageway that extends down into the ground several hundred feet. Carved out of the Giza Plateau’s limestone bedrock, its narrow size forces visitors to make their way in a crouched-down position for the length of those two-hundred feet. This monument is no playground for claustrophobics, rest assured. The passageway raises questions of its own regarding the building of the Great Pyramid, and how long it actually took to create. As independent researcher Gordon White summed it up,

Constraint analysis is an engineering technique to determine where the bottlenecks lie in a building project. That is, which steps in a construction cannot be made to go faster and/or also hold up the rest of the project... With specific reference to the Great Pyramid, the descending passage...is only 42 inches square, meaning that only one worker at any one time could be carving it out. This provides a neat and measurable example of constraint analysis: it would have taken almost twice Khufu’s reign for a single

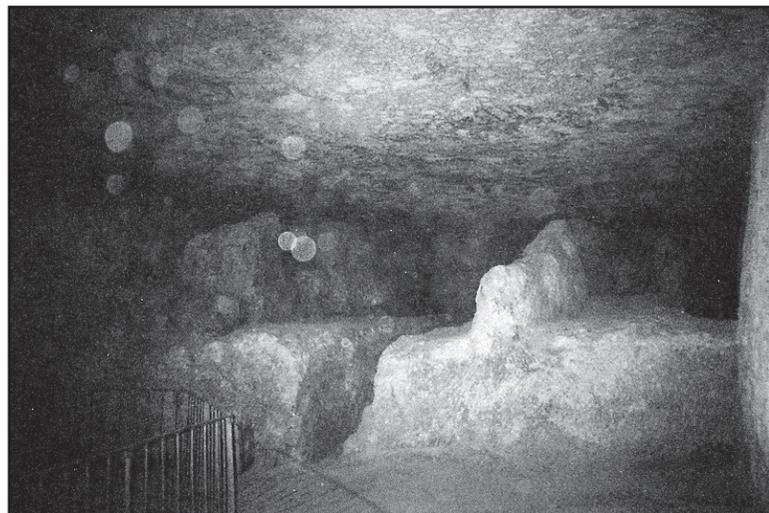


person to carve out this passageway using a dolerite pounder, and that is working twenty four hours a day. Not only is the pyramid too old to be a tomb, its construction cannot fit into the twenty-something year reign of Khufu.”¹

I finally emerged into the pit at the shaft’s bottom, which appeared much more roughly-hewn than the rest of the Pyramid. Its original function still isn’t fully understood by Egyptologists; while some believe it’s an abandoned burial chamber, others suggest it may have served ceremonial or shamanic purposes. The simple fact of the matter is, we don’t know.

Standing in the silence of the underground chamber, something about its muffled acoustics caught my attention, so on a hunch I decided to stomp down on the dirt floor as hard as I could. To my surprise, the resonance from that sound seemed to reverberate all the way up through the Pyramid, as if the entire monument had become a gigantic gong. That was remarkable, and reminded me of another experience I had in the Pyramid back during an earlier trip with John Anthony West in 1994. While lying in the sarcophagus and chanting a few obligatory “Oms” with the tour group that day – practically a rite of passage for many of those visiting the Great Pyramid – at one point I hit a certain note that caused the sarcophagus around me to resonate in an uncanny way, and my entire body to vibrate.

Between that sound up in the King’s Chamber and this one down inside the pit, it was easy to believe sonic effects like these were intentionally designed to be part of this structure’s true function. The more time I spend inside the Great Pyramid, the more I can’t help believe this extraordinary structure might represent an advanced magical technology the likes of which we can’t fully comprehend now, possibly involving a complex network of intentions, correspondences, and God-knows-what subtle energies, all of which combine to influence – what? The consciousness of humans inside of



Down in the pit beneath the Great Pyramid. (Photo © Ray Grasse)

it? The broader life and destiny of Egypt? Or perhaps even the entire world? I don't claim to know, but I have no doubt there's more to this monument than meets the eye.

After climbing back up from the pit through the passageway, I walked back outside the pyramid and found a ledge slightly higher up on one of its sides, where I sat beneath the stars and watched the lights of Cairo sparkling across the horizon.

AFTERMATH

The next day I called back home to the States to discover there was a family crisis that needed tending to, so I'd have to head home sooner than expected. But since negotiations with Zahi and company had reached a standstill anyway, it didn't really matter whether I departed sooner or later. As it turned out, the expedition drew to a close without any firm conclusions. Sadly, no treasures or evidence of lost civilizations would be uncovered this time around.

It was roughly one month later that I began noticing rumors on the Internet about the expedition and its supposed discoveries. The speculations were all sensationalistic, ranging from talk about the Hall of Records to alien spaceships uncovered beneath the Plateau. The fact that no hard information about the expedition had been released to the public only fanned the flames of speculation further. Around this time Boris went on the air to talk with popular radio show host Art Bell about the expedition, and thus before an audience of millions spilled the beans about what had taken place that February – in the process invoking the ire of some A.R.E. members who had expected him to keep the team's findings confidential for the time being.

Exactly one year later, on February 16th of 1998, I opened the newspaper to find this story, published by the Reuters news service, with the headline: "Egyptians Find Tomb of Ancient God Osiris." It read: "Sinking water levels have revealed a granite sarcophagus of the ancient Egyptian god Osiris in a 30-metre (98 feet) deep tomb at the Giza pyramids, Egyptian archeologist Zahi Hawass said on Wednesday." Apparently, during the twelve months since our team left Cairo, Zahi and his crew had been busy clearing out the chamber, and discovered that the slab we uncovered was indeed the lid to a stone sarcophagus, or royal coffin. It turned out to be empty, and was partially underwater.

Zahi seemed to feel the chamber and its contents weren't really that old, by Egyptian standards, perhaps dating from the period around 600 BCE, give or take 50 to 75 years. He also suggested the archaic chamber could be the mythical "Tomb of Osiris," described in tradition as a stone sarcophagus on an island surrounded by water, deep underground, where Osiris rose from the dead. Could the chamber we explored be that very spot? According to the press releases, Zahi certainly thought so. He went on to declare this was the most important archeological discovery of his entire career. "I never excavated this shaft before because it was always full of water,"

Zahi said, “but when the water went down about a year ago, we started the adventure.”

The most important discovery of *his* career? That took me by surprise, since he made no mention at all of Hurtak, Boris, or the A.R.E., even though they were the ones ultimately responsible for it. But perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised, since Zahi had something of a reputation as a claim-jumper on discoveries set into motion by others. As someone once explained to me, the politics of Egyptology are as bad if not worse than anything you'll encounter in the halls of Washington, DC.

It was one year later, in March of 1999, that Zahi's work down in the chamber was given worldwide TV exposure in the form of a Fox television special titled *Opening the Lost Tomb, Live!*, hosted by Maury Povich. During the prime-time special, viewers were treated to video footage of the chamber itself, images of the half-submerged sarcophagus and its suspended lid, and of course, Zahi himself presiding proudly over his discovery. It was exciting to see how the chamber looked with much of the mud and debris cleared out, and the sarcophagus revealed more fully now. But it was disappointing too, seeing how Boris, Hurtak, and the A.R.E. team were essentially being erased from the history books.

To his credit, though, Boris never let that theft of credit bother him, since he had other projects to pursue, including a TV special that hoped to finally explore the suspected chamber beneath the Sphinx's paw. Both Boris and Joseph Schor were eager to procure financial backing for the project, but knew it wouldn't be easy. In addition to all the baseline expenses involved, there were the large sums of money needed to “reimburse” all the Egyptian officials involved. However it was budgeted, it wouldn't be a cheap project. At one point Boris and Joseph even arranged a meeting with media mogul Rupert Murdoch in his London offices, since he had shown interest in the project. When I asked Boris why Murdoch of all people would want to get involved in something like this, Boris simply answered, “Well, Murdoch is a Mason.”

They eventually had their meeting with Rupert, though nothing ever came of it. Boris had his other projects, including ones in Japan, Africa, and Central America, most of them in collaboration with Hurtak. But he returned to the Giza Plateau several more times to do further research into the unique acoustics of the Great Pyramid. After returning from one of those trips, he claimed that what he'd uncovered there would dwarf any other discoveries in Egypt – including the long-sought-for Hall of Records.

He was hesitant to reveal exactly what they found until all the results were analyzed, except to explain how one of them involved strange, wave-like hollows they detected beneath the floor of the King's Chamber. “That's probably what's responsible for the room's unique acoustics,” he suggested. He said that a professor from the University of Washington was currently in the process of converting their mountains of data into computer simulations, and those were a revelation to behold.

Sadly, that's the last I ever heard of those findings. Along with a series of legal problems, Boris's health deteriorated, and when he was finally diagnosed with a cancerous lump on his liver he stubbornly resisted chemotherapy. “If I go,” he said, “I want to go riding down the Amazon River taking ayahuasca.”

During our next few phone calls he sounded increasingly weary and short of breath. In March of 2002, I called to finish up a conversation we'd begun several days earlier about a project we hoped to do involving research being done by my friend Barbara Keller. Boris's long-time friend Beth Melnick answered the phone, and when I asked to speak with him, there was a long pause. She solemnly informed me that Boris had died just the day before. He hadn't gone out riding down the Amazon ingesting hallucinogenic potions after all; he passed away quietly shortly after watching the latest broadcast of the Academy Awards. Which is just as well, since he always had fun watching the ceremony, so at least he went out doing something he enjoyed.

I knew they hadn't spoken to each other in years, so I decided to call up John Anthony West that afternoon to give him the news. He was as taken aback by it as I had been. It's startling when a figure like Boris passes away, since he seemed larger-than-life, maybe even larger than death. But any sadness John felt about Boris was clearly tempered by the longstanding feud which had torn them apart years earlier. Several days later, he posted these words on the Internet:

Those who met Boris at any time over the course of his 69 years, even briefly, probably will not have forgotten him; physically powerful, radiating an almost superhuman, high octane intensity, with a quick, coarse humor and an even quicker, coarser temper, infinitely resourceful especially when his back was to the wall — which it usually was, since he found ways to make sure that's where it stayed.

DECODING THE TOMB OF OSIRIS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

As the years went on I heard little else about the Tomb of Osiris, other than more fantastical speculations circulating on the Internet. Those included suggestions that it's actually an inter-dimensional portal which can only be opened by someone with the appropriate DNA. Well, okay.

But in 2016 my interest was sparked anew by research I came across by independent researcher Robert Temple. Temple first gained attention in the 1970s for a controversial book titled *The Sirius Mystery*, suggesting a possible connection between the Dogon tribe further south in Africa and the ancient Egyptian civilization up north. But in a much more recent book, *Egyptian Dawn*, Temple focused heavily on the Giza Plateau itself, and devoted an entire chapter to the Osiris shaft.²

Addressing the different levels of the shaft, he suggested it was likely constructed in stages during different historical periods. While the conventional academic wisdom theorized that it dated back to the so-called "Saitic" period, extending from 664 BC to 525 BC — relatively late in Egyptian history — Temple challenged that view, and claimed that it was considerably older. How did he come to that conclusion? That's where things start to get interesting.

As mentioned earlier, the second level of the Osiris shaft contains two large stone sarcophagi. Temple found that the black one with the smooth surface was made of granite, a commonly-used stone throughout ancient Egypt and relatively obtainable for creating ancient tombs and monuments. However, he discovered that the second, more roughly-hewn sarcophagus on that level was carved from a more obscure stone called dacite.

How obscure? Aside from the fact it apparently wasn't used at any other time in ancient Egypt for creating monuments, statues, or sarcophagi, there doesn't appear to be a vein of dacite anywhere in Africa large enough to produce a sarcophagus like the one on the second level of the Osiris shaft. To the best of anyone's knowledge, the dacite deposits closest to Cairo are hundreds of miles away.

That means the Egyptians would have had to transport this massively heavy object overland across great distances, before lowering it down into this relatively narrow shaft. How they managed to do all that is enough of a mystery, but why they did so is just as much of one, especially when you consider how much easier it would have been to simply use the far more accessible Aswan granite. If nothing else, it points to the enormous importance the ancient Egyptians placed on different types of stone and their symbolic meanings.

But that's not the only mystery. One of Temple's projects involved his attempts to date the monuments and objects of the Giza Plateau using a method invented by nuclear physicist Ioannis Liritzis called 'optical thermoluminescence'. While no instruments

can carbon date solid stone, thermoluminescence can roughly determine a stone's last exposure to sunlight, which can indirectly help to zero in on a rough time frame. Using that method, Temple dated the construction of the dacite sarcophagus to roughly 2800 BC, give or take 550 years either way – providing us with a window ranging roughly anywhere from 3350 BC to 2200 BC. That raises the intriguing possibility that the dacite sarcophagus could be several centuries older than the Giza pyramids themselves, as conventionally dated. If so, that would make the dacite sarcophagus one of the oldest objects on the Giza Plateau.

But what about the third level down in the shaft, and the granite sarcophagus in the so-called “Tomb of Osiris” that we explored in 1997? When Temple applied the thermoluminescence method to it, he found it was somewhat younger in age – although still much older than Zahi's estimate. It dated back to about 1700 BC, give or take 400 years. That gave it a comfortable range of having been constructed somewhere between 2370 BC to 1270 BC., roughly during the Middle Kingdom.

While that means there could possibly be some overlap between the second and third levels of the shaft, in terms of their age, it does suggest that the second level is older and firmly located within – or possibly even before – the so-called “Old Kingdom” era. Robert Temple thinks that while the second level was originally created as a tomb for important figures, possibly including an early pharaoh, the third level at the very bottom of the shaft was likely created later for more ritualistic purposes. To say it all a little differently, the second level may be more significant for archaeological reasons (due to its great age), whereas the third level seems to be more important for more symbolic and ritualistic reasons.

And what might those rituals within the “Tomb of Osiris” on that lowest level have consisted of, exactly? Inspired partly by the work of Egyptologist Rosalie David, Temple offers up some educated guesses as to what these may have looked like.

At another site in Egypt called Abydos, there are the remains of a sunken temple commonly referred to as the 'Osireion', which was also believed to commemorate the burial and resurrection of Osiris. By studying the rituals practiced there, as described in inscriptions found both in the Osireion and the adjoining Temple of Osiris, one can plausibly reconstruct some of what may have transpired in that chamber within the Giza well-shaft as well. Like the Osireion, *it's possible that the Tomb of Osiris served as a secret place of initiation and ritual re-enactment of the death by drowning, burial and resurrection of Osiris.*

Temple speculates this could have taken the form of the empty sarcophagus being opened, and the priest or pharaoh lying in the container and having the lid placed over them as part of the ceremony. This may have even included the act of “drowning” in the sarcophagus, with the participant using an air tube or the remaining air supply to breathe. Shortly afterwards, when the theorized ceremony calling Osiris to rise from the dead took place, complete with singing and praying, the lid could have been removed and the “resurrected” figure rise up to be “born again.” The ceremony may also have been attended by a priestess representing Isis, presiding over the ritual resurrection. As such, the empty sarcophagus in level three could be seen as a symbolic statement in much the same way that the empty tomb of Jesus was seen by his followers as a statement about his resurrection, and of life everlasting.

While this is all purely speculative, I find it compelling, certainly more so than any other explanation or theory about the chamber I've come across thus far. In the end, Temple sums things up this way:

In conclusion, I should say that the Osiris Shaft can never now be relegated to the status of a secondary feature of the Giza Plateau on the assumption that it is a Saitic burial shaft dating from the period 664 BC - 525 BC. This is now seen to be definitely not the case. The bottom level of the shaft is probably Middle Kingdom,

and Level Two is probably no later than the Fourth Dynasty. And what is more, [the dacite sarcophagus in level two], being made of a unique stone that occurs nowhere else – to our knowledge – amongst the surviving remains of the ancient Egyptian civilization, and being so unexpectedly ancient in date, must now be seen as one of the oldest and most precious of all carved objects to survive in the whole of Egypt. Also, **the ‘Tomb of Osiris’ must now be viewed as being of extraordinary importance, whether as a mystical burial site, or more likely as a mystical religious site for initiations or ceremonies connected with the Osirian religion during the second millennium BC.** (Emphasis mine.)³

A multitude of questions remain about the site and its contents. For instance, some still wonder whether there is a tunnel or channel leading out of the chamber besides the main shaft we entered it through. While we were down in the chamber, for instance, we clearly saw a small cavity off in the northwest corner of the room which appeared to be hacked out of the wall and seemed to lead out beyond the chamber. As of this writing, the latest reports claim that Zahi’s crew sent a remote controlled robot through that opening and found that the small channel extended about 150 feet before an accumulation of mud prevented any further exploration.⁴

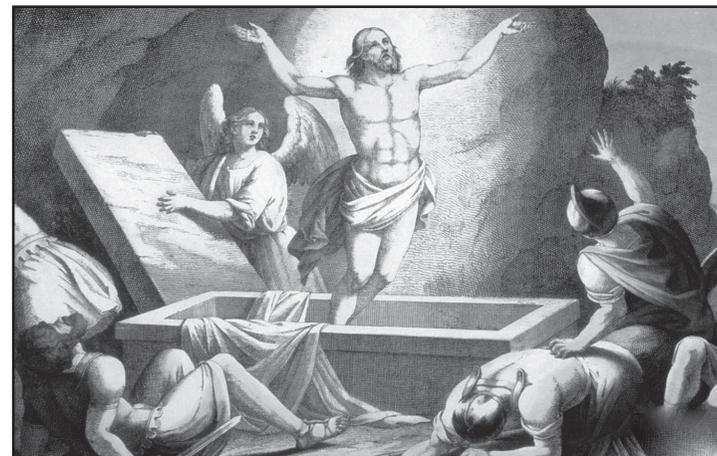
Another intriguing clue lies in the fact that the water in the moat around the central 'island' where the sarcophagus lies seems to be fed by a natural source. Unlike more polluted water sources further down the Giza Plateau, this water even seems drinkable, and was supposedly used for years as a source of well water for locals. If so, what is the source of the water? As Temple points out, the rock walls and floor of the chamber seem too solid for there to be random leaks. So does it enter through an artificial channel deliberately constructed by the ancients? Apart from the mind-boggling logistical challenges that would have posed for early engineers, it also raises the possibility there may still be an opening of some sort located

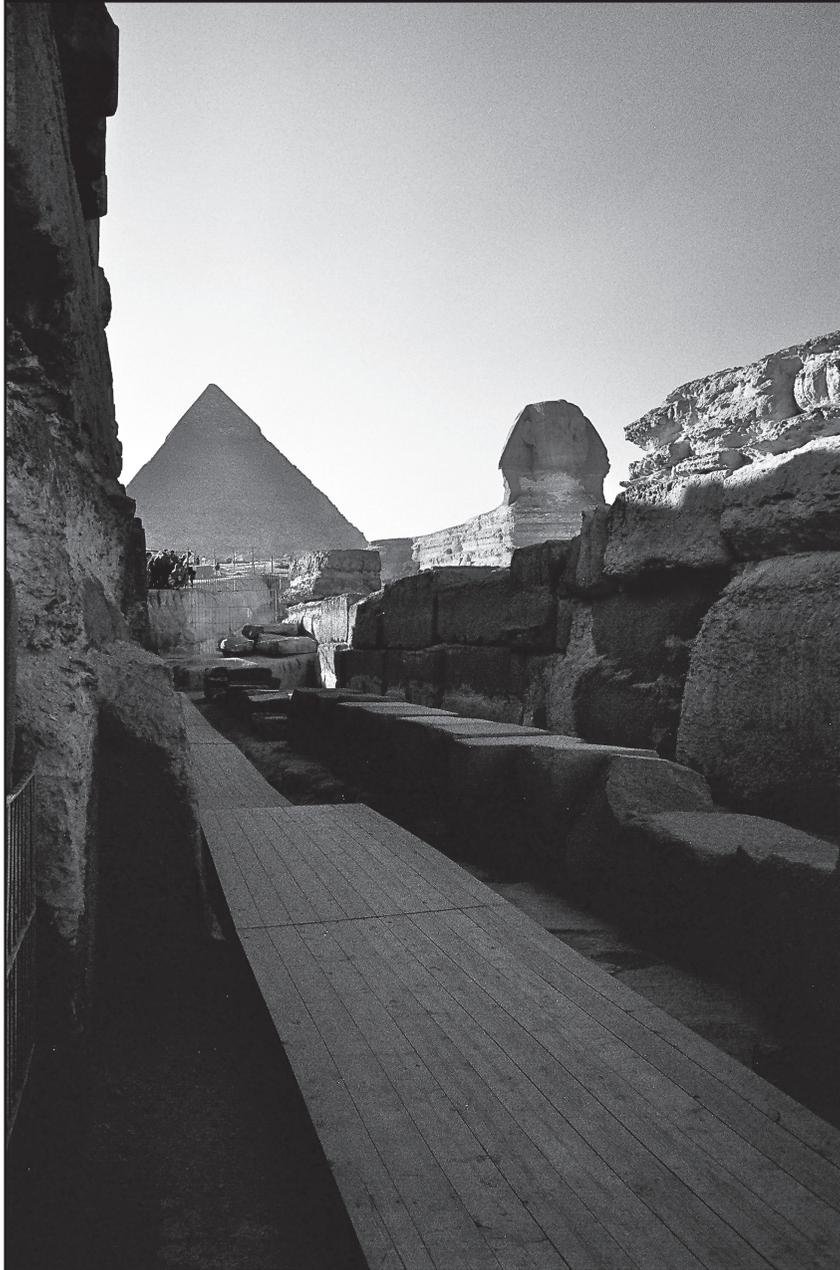
underwater in that room. Clearly, there is much work yet to be done to unlock the full significance of the Tomb of Osiris, not to mention the Giza Plateau generally.⁵

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

Reflecting back on this distant culture, it can almost feel sometimes as though one is looking at an alien civilization, its customs and rituals are so far removed from our own as to seem incomprehensible. Yet despite those differences, we still detect elements that feel strangely familiar to us in some ways.

Consider those theorized rituals which may have occurred in that chamber deep underground, involving the ceremonial death and resurrection of Osiris. Not long after reading Temple’s book and his speculations about the chamber, I was invited to watch a friend perform in an Easter pageant being put on by a mega-church in our area. As I watched the actors on stage recreating the death of Christ and his resurrection, complete with a depiction of the stone being rolled away from the tomb, as well as Christ’s radiant ascension into heaven (all portrayed with clever lighting and stage effects), I





Down in the pit beneath the Great Pyramid. (Photo © Ray Grasse)

couldn't help notice similarities to what might have unfolded in that archaic chamber. Despite the differences, it's clear that our present-day civilization is still celebrating the death and resurrection of a divine being in ways that echo those of ancient times.

Or consider the simple but ubiquitous Christian practice of baptism itself, in which a person is lowered into water and symbolically "reborn" into a new spiritual life. Looked upon with fresh eyes, this ritual shares an obvious resonance with those in which an initiate or pharaoh in Egypt may have been immersed in water and "reborn" into a new life. Even without the added element of water, some have suggested that the sarcophagus in the King's Chamber in the Great Pyramid served a kindred function, of facilitating the symbolic deaths and rebirths of initiates, priests, or even pharaohs. It's also worth noting that modern Masonic ceremonies feature their own death/rebirth ritual that initiates must undergo to be admitted into their order.

Whether these various rites of death and resurrection in our own time were handed down through the millennia in some direct line of transmission, or simply reflect a perennial archetype that recurs throughout time in various places, it does suggest that our spiritual impulses may not be quite so different from those of our forebears as we'd like to believe.

Ray Grasse is the author of several books, including *The Waking Dream* (Quest Books, 1996), *Under a Sacred Sky* (Wessex, 2015), and most recently, *An Infinity of Gods* (Inner Eye Publications, 2017). His websites are www.raygrasse.com and www.raygrassephotography.com.