CHAPTER VI
BUILDINGS OF THE OLD KINGDOM. MENTUHETEP'S TEMPLE

The kings of the Vth dynasty erected their pyramids at Abusir between Giza and Sakkara. The funerary temple attached to that of Ne-user (Useren) Ra already mentioned (p. 38) is of much interest. Parts of the paving and walls are of polished black marble; the columns of the lotus-bud form are of granite. There is also a sacrificial basin with a drain in the form of a lion's head, and sculptures in relief on both inner and outer walls.

The temples attached to the pyramids of Sahu-Ra and Neferarika-Ra of the same dynasty have also been excavated. These three temples are the earliest in which mural reliefs have been found.¹

¹ Hall, Near East, p. 131. See also K. and H., p. 99.
Somewhat to the north of Abusir, at a place called Er-Righa, are the remains of a temple of the Sun built by the same king Ne-user-Ra. The ritual portion was raised on an artificial platform, towards the west end of which was a pyramidal structure, usually represented as a massive but stunted obelisk upon a podium with battering sides, apparently a link between the combination of a pyramid and mastaba and the more familiar form of obelisk. In the centre of the court is a circular altar of alabaster, and at the east end nine basins of the same material, over which the victims were slaughtered.

South of Sakkarah towards Dashur is the Mastabat-el-Faraun (Pharaoh's Bench) an immense monument of large stone blocks. It is 66 feet high and 340 by 240 feet in area, with sloping sides. It is evidently a royal tomb, and its interior arrangement with a sloping passage, a horizontal passage with slides for stone plugs and chambers resembles that of a pyramid. From its shape it might be dated before the IVth dynasty, but Messrs. King and Hall

\[\text{\footnote{This seems to be the building described by Col. Vyse as the Pyramid of Reegah. He gives the measurement of the base as 123 feet 4 inches square. \cite{Vyse,iii,10.} }}\]
consider it to be later than the Vth to which it has been assigned.¹ There is some indication of an additional structure on the top, and it is possible that this was a small pyramid, or obelisk, and that a form combining the two may have been occasionally adopted. At Giza there is a large tomb south-east of the pyramid of Khaf-Ra² which seems originally to have had some such form. The annexed diagram derived from pictographic inscriptions at Sakkara³ appears to represent a monument of that kind. But the simple pyramid continued in use, and at a much later date became common for small brick tombs, of which there are many remains at Abydos. In these more ordinary sepulchral monuments the mortuary chamber and the shrine were both within the structure.⁴

Little is known of the kings of the VIIth to the Xth dynasties, under whom the centre of government was removed from Memphis to a more southern region of the Nile valley. The pyramid, however, continued to be

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¹ K. and H., p. 107.  
² See illustration, p. 46.  
⁴ P. and C., vol. i, p. 244. The pyramidal form of tomb was imitated at later dates in other lands. There are a number of such monuments
used as a royal monument, though it was less solidly constructed than under the early Memphite kings, until after the complete extinction of the old kingdom. In the XIIth dynasty a reversion was made to the ancient use of brick, and there are remains at Dashîr of brick pyramids one of which is the secondary tomb of Amenemhat III, and another the actual sepulchre of a somewhat obscure king, Hor, who may have been his son and associate. Further south at Illahun is a similar one of Senusert II. It is probable that these brick cores were originally cased with stone.

The most interesting monument of the period when the sovereignty passed away from the representatives of the old Memphite dynasties and fell into the hands of Theban princes, is the memorial of Mentuhotep 2 of the XIth dynasty which was discovered in 1903. It is mentioned in an inscription by the name of Akh-aset and is adjacent to the south-west side of a larger temple of the XVIIIth dynasty at Der-el-Bahri on the left bank of the Nile in the Thebaid. It lies at the foot of the high cliff in the Sudan of dates not long before the Christian era. They are the tombs of native kings: and some of them are 50 or 60 feet high, but their slope is much steeper than in the ancient pyramids. P. and C., i, 217-219.

1 In this case the core was a framework of intersecting brick walls filled in with stone.

2 Neb-hapet-Ra Mentuhotep. There were several rulers of this dynasty with the throne-name of Mentuhotep. This one was the greatest, but it is doubtful whether he is to be reckoned as the second or third king of that name. See Hall, N. E., p. 142 note.
REMAINS OF NORTH BRICK PYRAMID. DASHUR
Probably intended for Senusert III. (XIIth dynasty.)

BRICK PYRAMID OF SENUSERT II. ILLAHUN
which overlooks the Nile-valley facing towards the southeast. A rectangular platform is levelled on the slope at the base of the cliff on which are the remains of a base or podium 70 feet square, composed of rubble and flint, which formerly supported a pyramid. The latter seems from some fragments to have been built of brick faced with fine white marble-like limestone. The whole structure was solid and contained no tomb, being merely an architectural feature. The base had sloping sides finished with a cavetto cornice, and roundels at the angles such as
PLAN OF THE XIITH DYNASTY TEMPLE AT DÉR-EL-BAHRI
(By permission of the Egypt Exploration Fund.)
were universal in the later pylons. Round the base was a covered ambulatory composed of a triple row (except on the side near the cliff, where there were only two rows) of octagonal sandstone pillars on circular bases. The enclosing wall of this colonnade was decorated both on the outer and inner sides with shallow coloured reliefs depicting scenes of civil, military and religious life, and there was another colonnade of rectangular pillars outside the front and side walls of the enclosure. The back portion of the platform consisted of a court, 65 feet wide with a double row of octagonal pillars, from which descended into the earth a corridor 500 feet long ending in a chamber lined with large granite blocks similar to those in the pyramids. It contains an alabaster shrine which was probably the sanctuary of the Ka or disembodied double of the king. Behind the entrance of this gallery the court above was continued at the same width through the sloping base of the cliff till it reached its actual face, in the form of a low hypostyle hall 60 feet long with ten rows of eight octagonal columns, at the west end of which was a niche or shrine with an alabaster altar in front of it.

The main platform was approached on the front by an inclined plane or ramp, which was flanked on both sides by a lower colonnade along the front wall of the platform. Behind the base of the pyramid are six mortuary shrines or chapels of ladies of the harem, designated as priestesses of Hathor, whose tombs are in the adjacent court at the back.¹

There was an interesting shrine of the Cow-goddess

¹ This temple was excavated in 1903-7, by Professor Naville and Mr. H. R. Hall. See their account with numerous illustrations published by the Egypt Exploration Fund, by whose permission the above plan and illustration are inserted.
Hathor adjoining the west court of the temple on the north side, which was found with a remarkable image of the Cow intact, but it is of much later date than Mentuhetep’s temple and belongs chronologically to the XVIIIth dynasty.
ROCK-HEWN TOMBS AT BENI-HASAN

3 Khnemuhetep II. 4 Khnemuhetep IV. 5 Unfinished.
The numbers are those assigned to them in the guide books.