

Published in IAE Abstract papers p. 250
Fourth International Congress of Egyptologists
Munich 26 Aug - 1 Sept.
abstract

THE GREAT DRY MOAT SURROUNDING
THE STEP PYRAMID COMPLEX OF HORUS NETJERYKHET

By, NABIL SWELIM, Ph.D.

Parts of this great dry moat or trench were unearthed in the course of excavating monuments in the area surrounding the Step Pyramid Complex, without identifying its nature. It can be recognised on aerial photographs recorded over the last sixty years; and can be seen on location by careful tracing of its course. It approximately measures 750 x 525 metres, with a width of about 40 metres which seems to be uniform all around, and a depth which varies to maintain a level bottom ? but at one point reaches 26 metres. The project however was not complete, yet the overall plan is that of the Hieroglyph^h 'battlemented enclosure', or 'reed shelter in the fields', the overlapping sides being south of the Complex.

The similarity of the great dry moat and the much smaller continuous trenches surrounding the royal tombs and open courts of Dyn.I (in which are found subsidiary burials) is striking. And may become an important link between those early burials and the cemeteries surrounding the pyramids of the Old Kingdom.

As far as I know, the moat preserved the isolation of the Complex of Netjerykhhet for the remaining years of Dyn.III, and whole length of Dyn.IV. Nothing that could be dated earlier than Userkaf has been found between the enclosure wall of the Complex and the moat.

Userkaf could have built his upper pyramid temple east of his pyramid by filling in the great dry moat, but he did not and had the temple unusually located south of his pyramid for a reason probably connected with the moat. Unas could not have planned his complex without building a dyke in the moat (which became vulnerable to everyone) for his causeway, and lined the western end for his boat pits. Other parts were filled in for mastabas of his wives and relatives.

June, 1985.