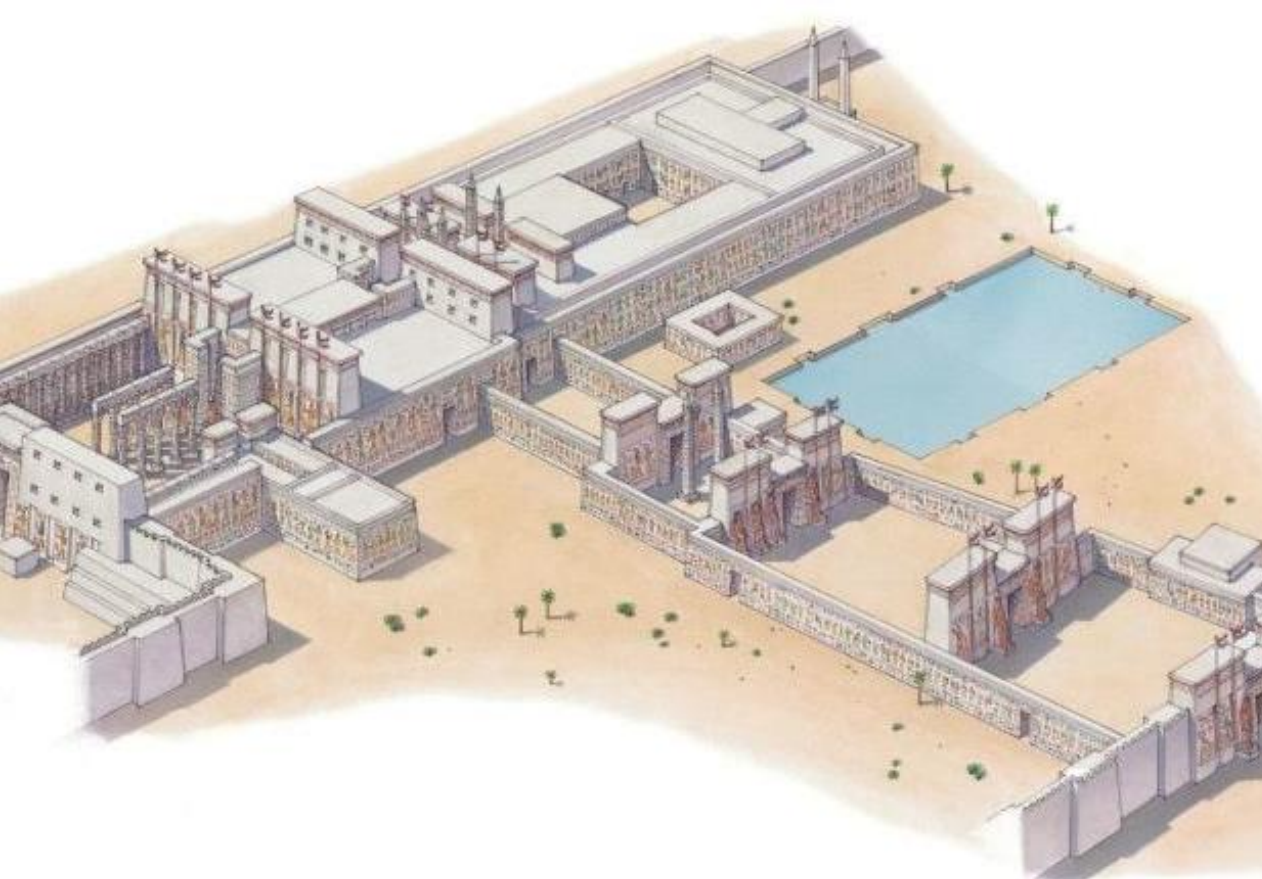
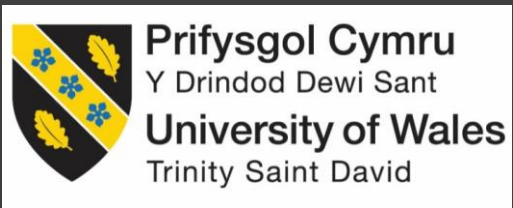




Waset (Luxor) - *A Sacred City and the Sky*



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University of Wales Trinity Saint David

The aim of this lecture:

- To give you a case study of a sacred city that of Waset, Egypt.
- To show how sacredness was enhanced/created by architecture, the sky and Egyptian cosmology.
- To give you an understanding of how a sacred city builds sacredness by incorporating different structures possibly linked by calendar, mythology or time (sun or moon).



Waset
(Luxor,
Thebes),
Egypt



Temple Complex, Luxor.

Karnak, Mut and Luxor temples, all linked by a precessional way – the Opet Festival.

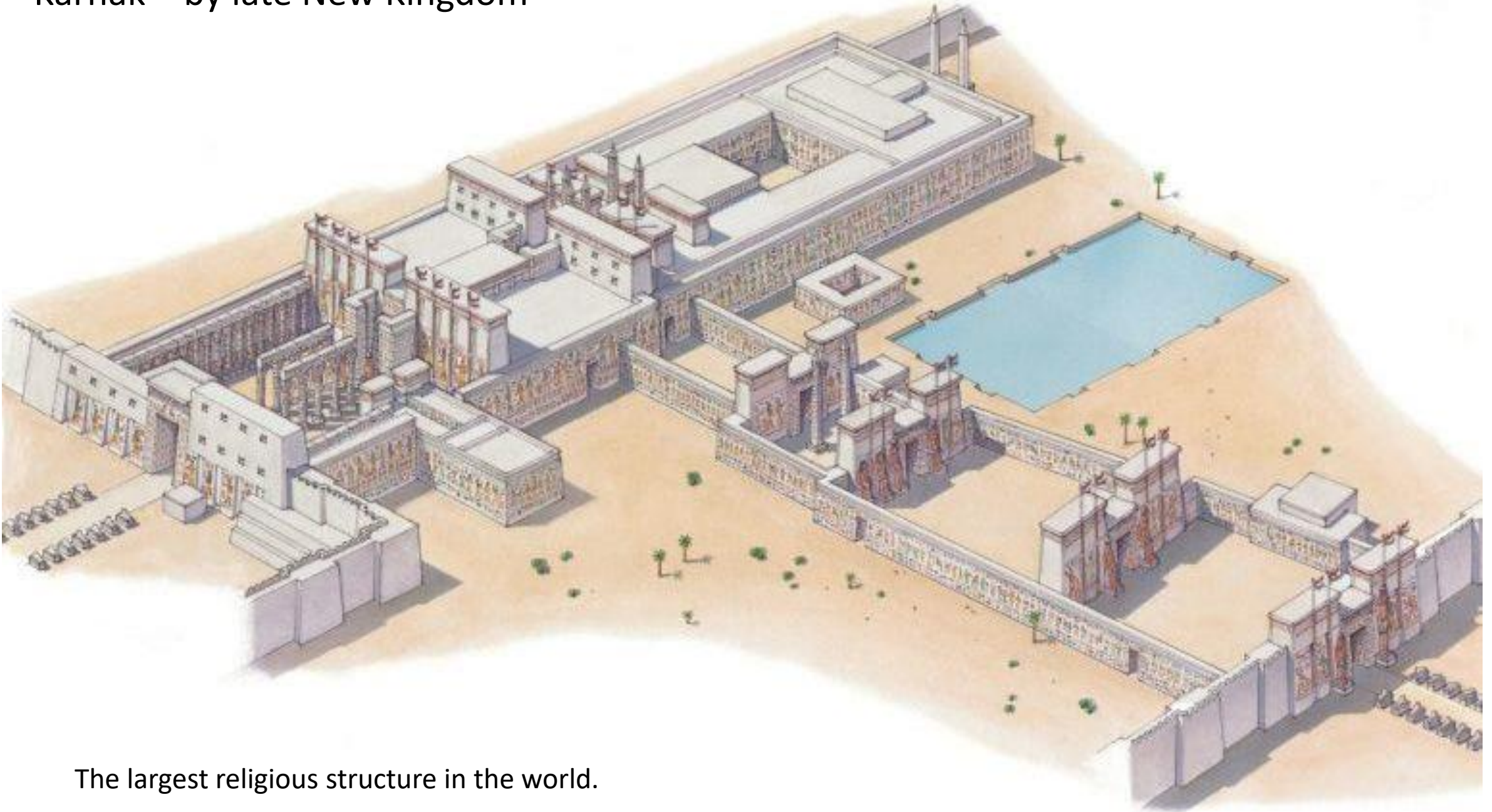
The temple complex was commenced in the 12th Dynasty (c.2000 BCE) and then saw a constant expansion and rebuilding over the next 2000 years.



Opet, ancient Egyptian festival of the second month of the lunar calendar, pa-en-ipet, when the Nile flooded this was a celebration of life. The festival was known as the 'beautiful feast of Opet'.

The god Amun-Re would unit with Mut, his consort, made a ritual journey from their shrines at Karnak to the temple of Luxor.

Karnak – by late New Kingdom



The largest religious structure in the world.



Temple of Mut, Luxor



Mut

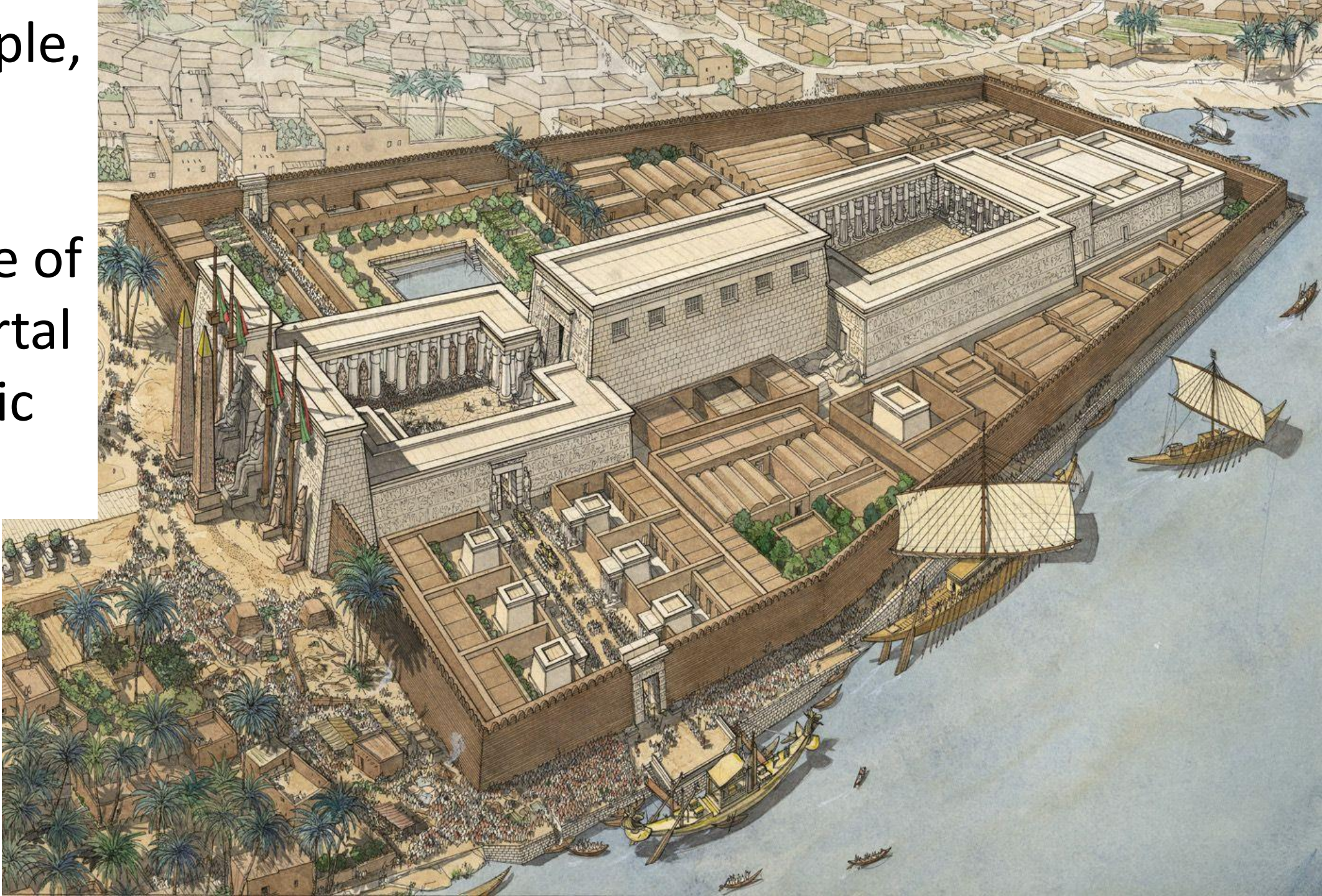


Precessional Way, Luxor



Luxor Temple, Luxor

The temple of
the immortal
pharaonic
soul





Luxor Temple



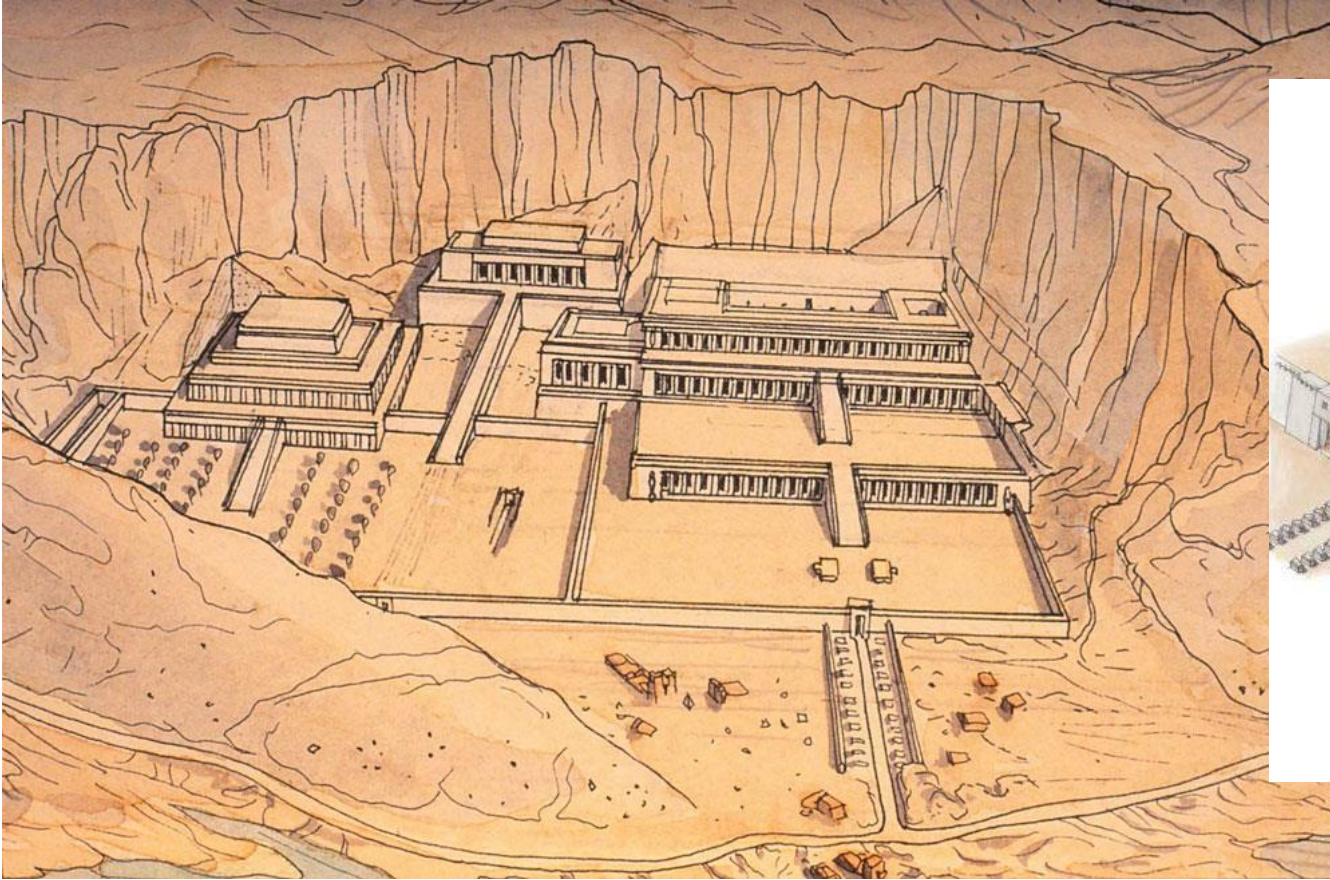
The City of Waset —
Thebes — Luxor



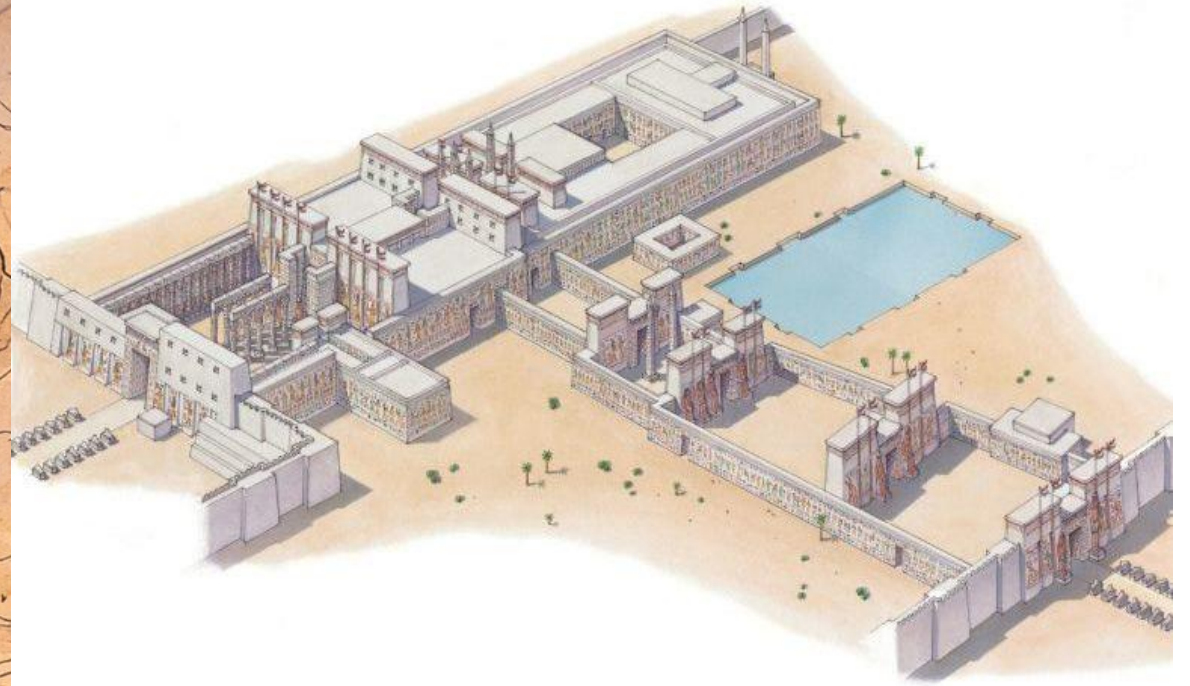
Deir el-Bahiri – 18th dynasty – 1500 BC



From Deir el Bahiri points directly
across the Nile to Karnak



Karnak – points directly across
the Nile to Deir el Bahiri



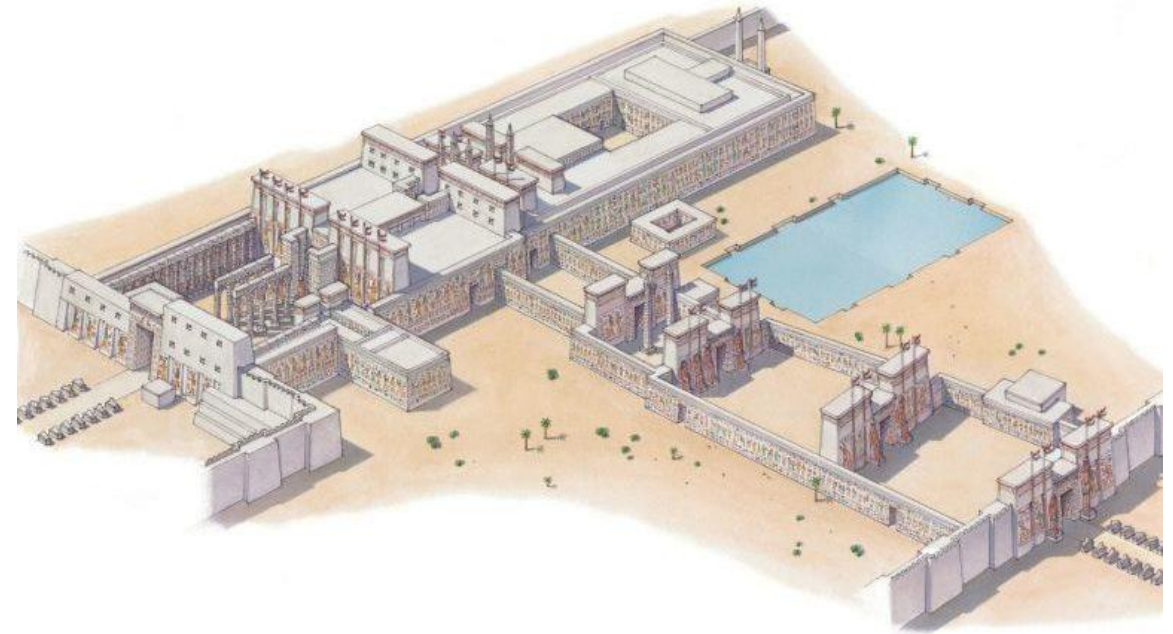
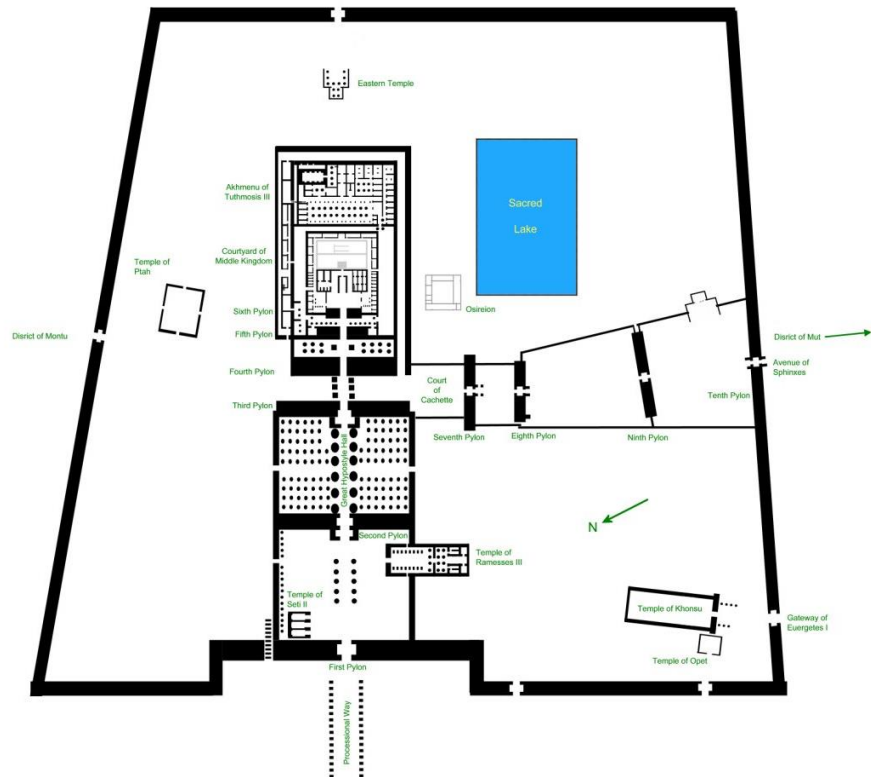
West bank

Deir el Bahiri

Karnak



Precinct of Amun-Re





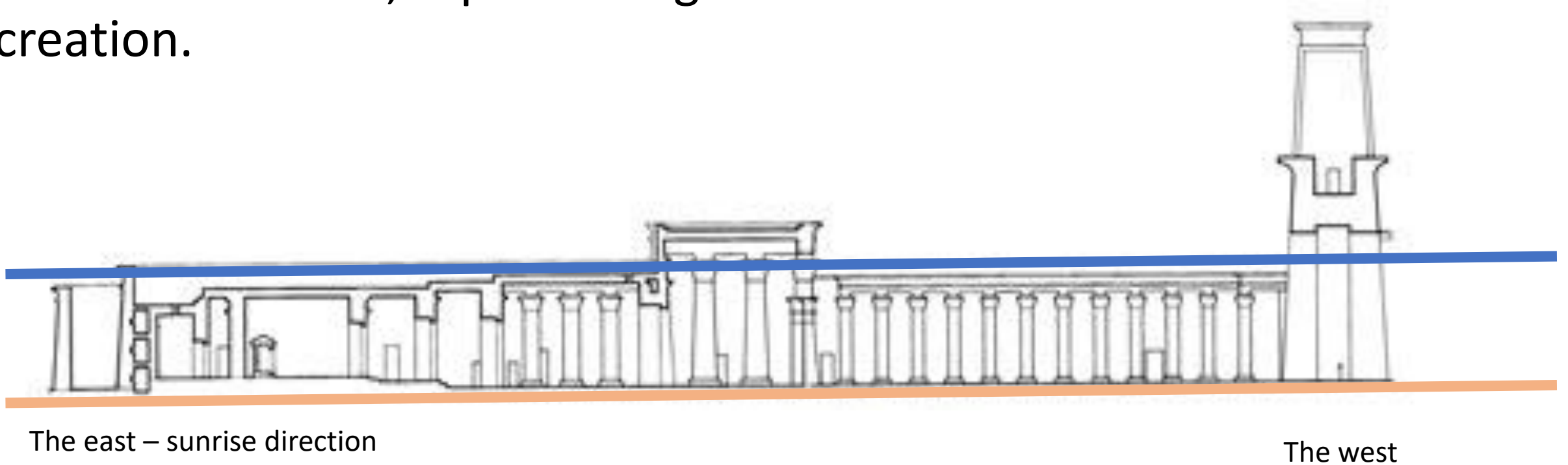
Cultural summary of Karnak – the Temple of Amun.

Amun is the divine darkness that is all knowing. He gives the sun and thus sunlight which orders and creates the world, and he provided the king – the pharaonic soul - to rule the earth.

His temple, like other Egyptian temples, reflects the entire Egyptian cosmos.



The dark sanctuary of the god held a mound of earth, representing creation.



The standard Egyptian temple – the floor level rises as the roof lowers so the back of the temple, the sanctuary, is dark and private. Only particular priests and the king could enter into the sanctuary which housed the god.



The Sanctuary of Amun-Re



The east – sunrise direction

The west

To enter the sanctuary you needed
to move through the hypostyle hall

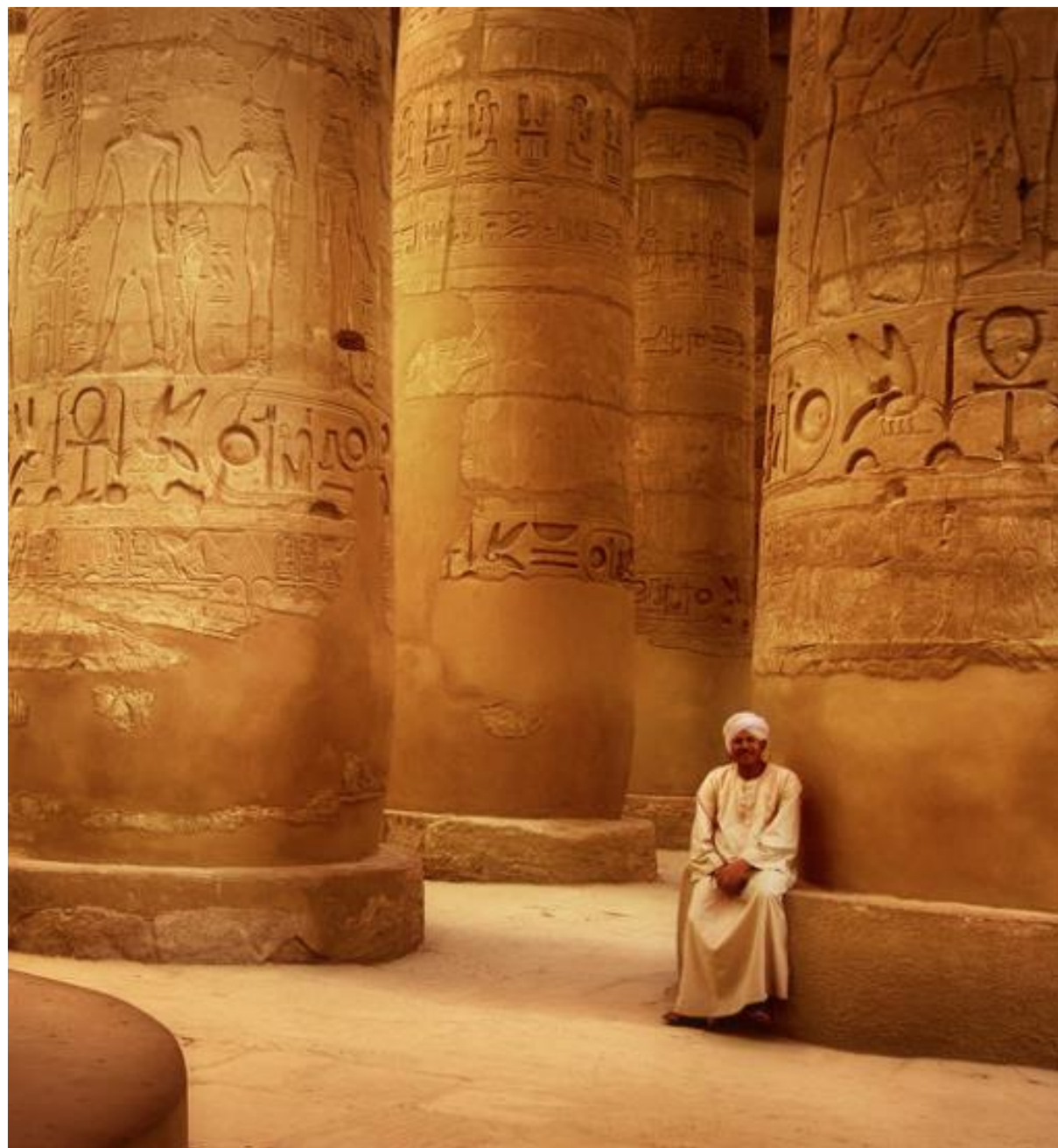


- The hypostyle hall – represent the papyrus swamps which lead to the place of the ‘first occasion’ – the sacred mound which is central to the Egyptian creation myth.

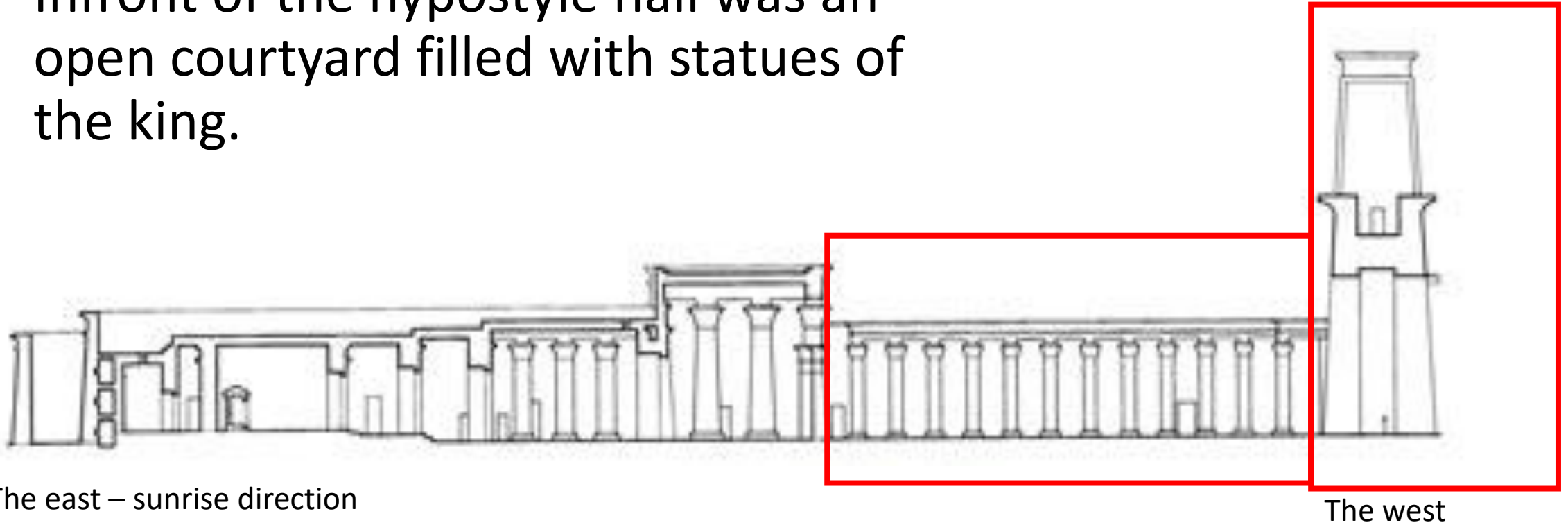
Karnak: The twelve huge columns in the centre are 21 meters (70 ft) high, and it is said that the tops of each of their open papyrus flower capitals, 5.4 meters (18 ft) in diameter, could each support 100 men. There are a total of 134 columns.







Infront of the hypostyle hall was an open courtyard filled with statues of the king.



The temple was then fronted with pylons.



The open courtyard, filled with statues of the king, is where the sun shined on earth and bestows its power to the king.



The Temple of Amun.

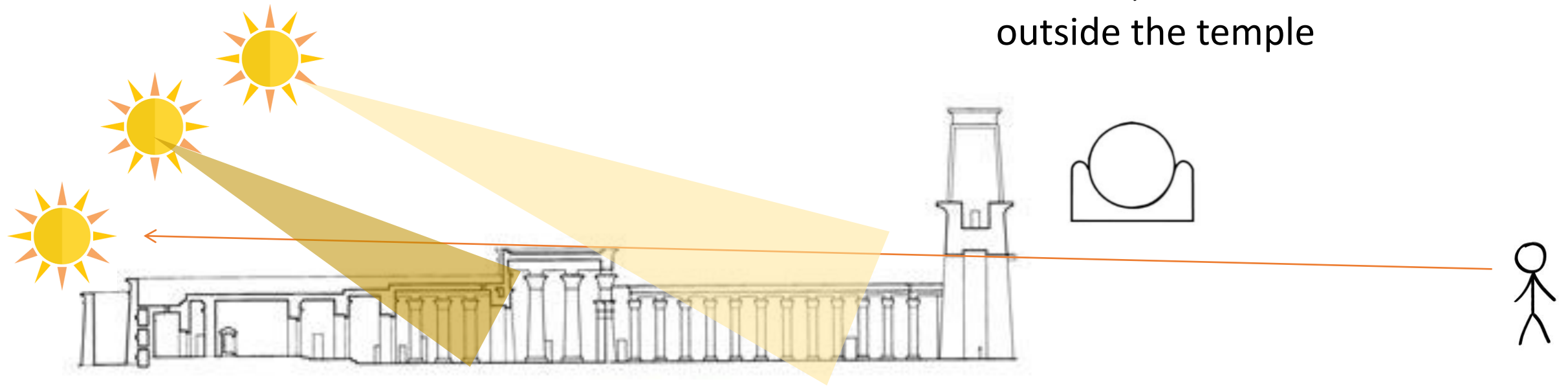
When you stand outside of the temple the pylons represent the eastern hills that the sun rises over



The structure of the temple – the sun rose out of the dark sanctuary – rising through the (pylons) – then shone into the courtyard where the king received the sun's light.

The structure of the temple enacted the Egyptian cosmology every day.

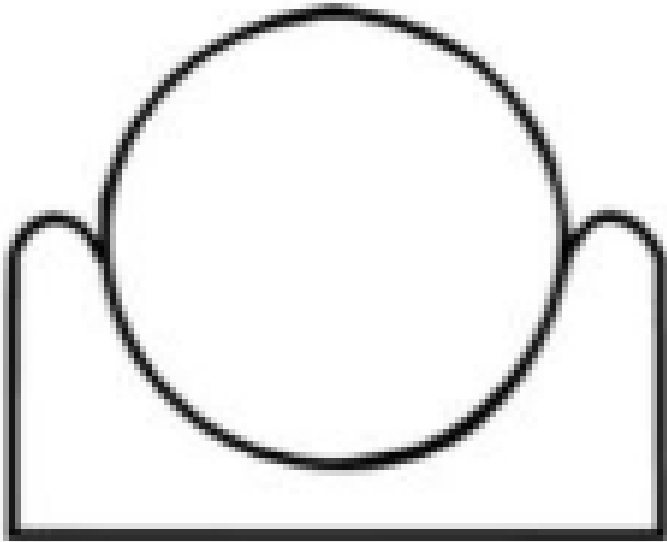
The sun 'writes' the hieroglyph, *3ht* 'horizon, to be active' for an observer outside the temple



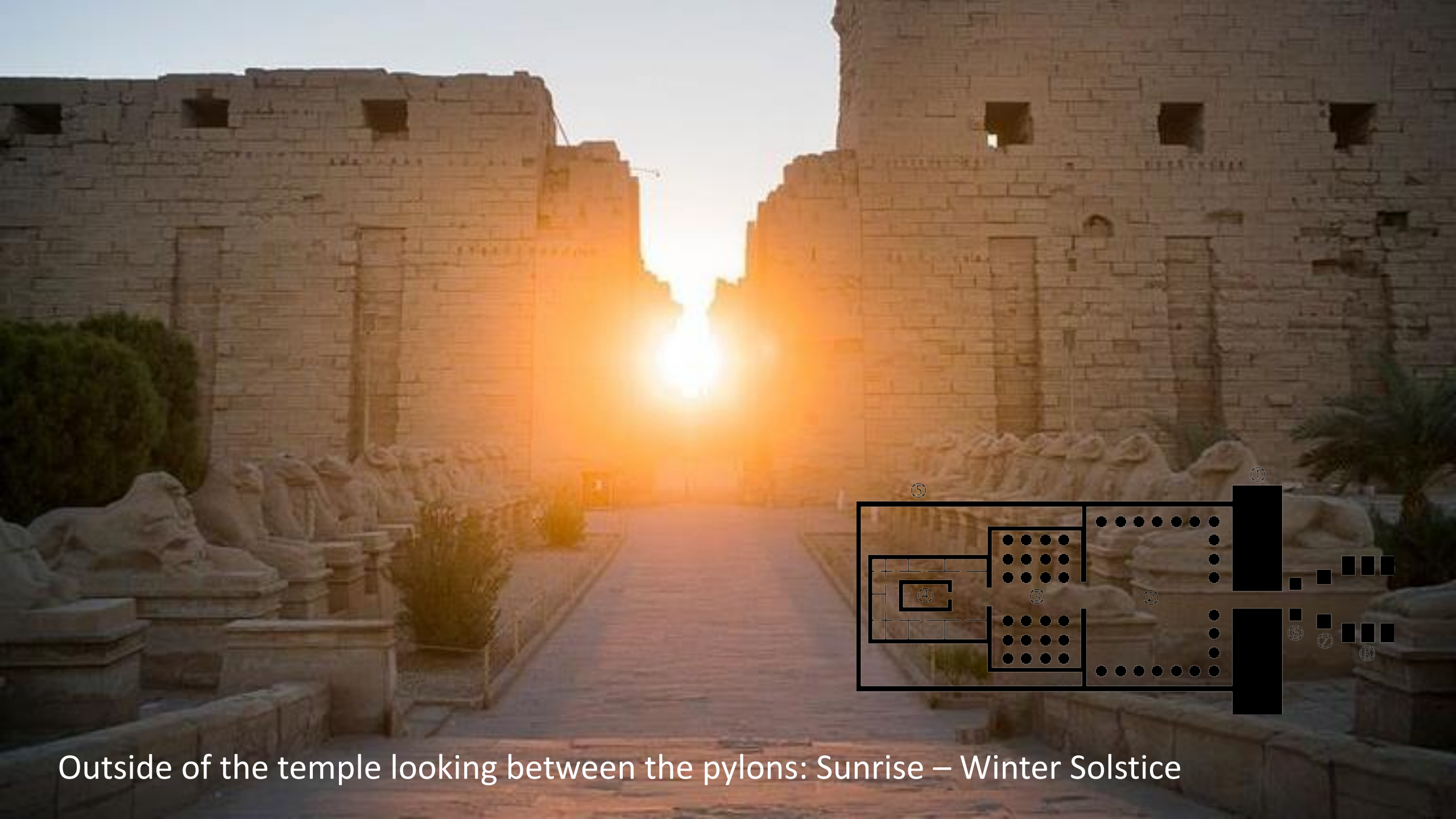


The Sun at Karnak

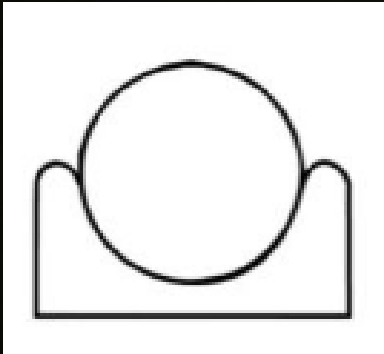
The orientation of the 12th Dynasty temple (2000 BC) was maintained by all other building and rebuilding and is aligned to the rising winter solstice sun.



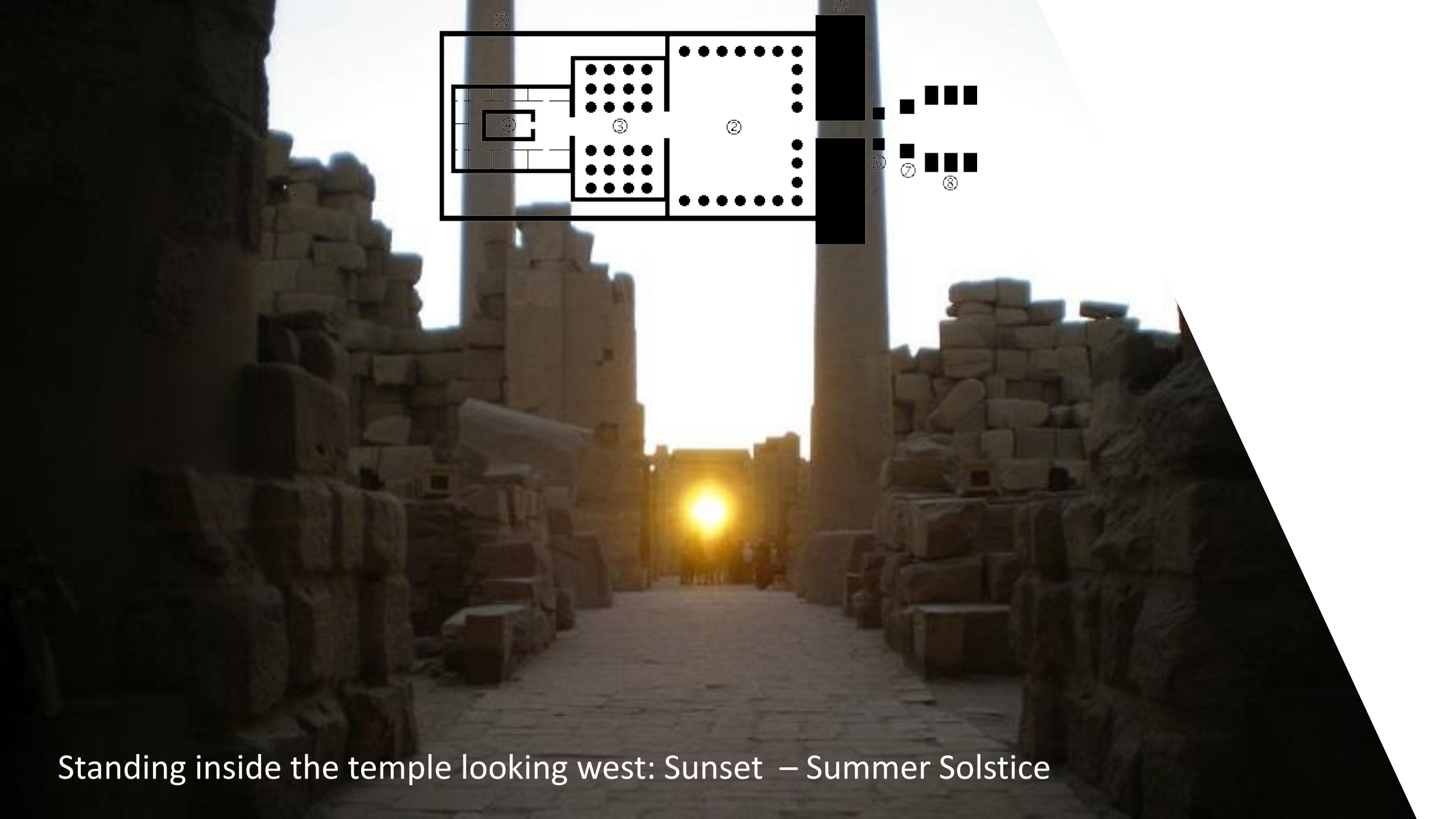
As the sun rises at the winter solstice it 'writes' the hieroglyph, *3ht* 'horizon, to be active' for an observer outside the temple.



Outside of the temple looking between the pylons: Sunrise – Winter Solstice

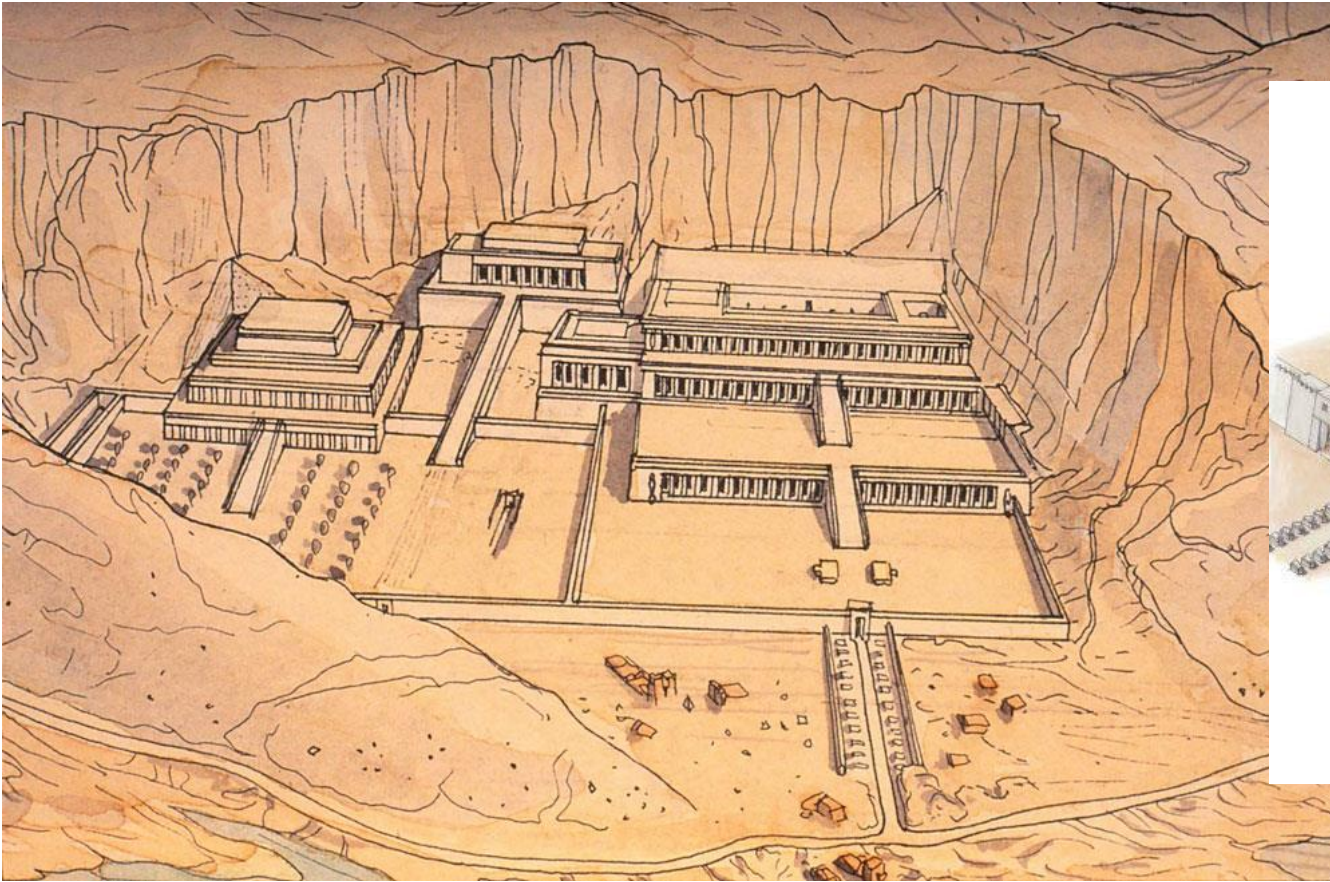


Sunrise – Winter Solstice

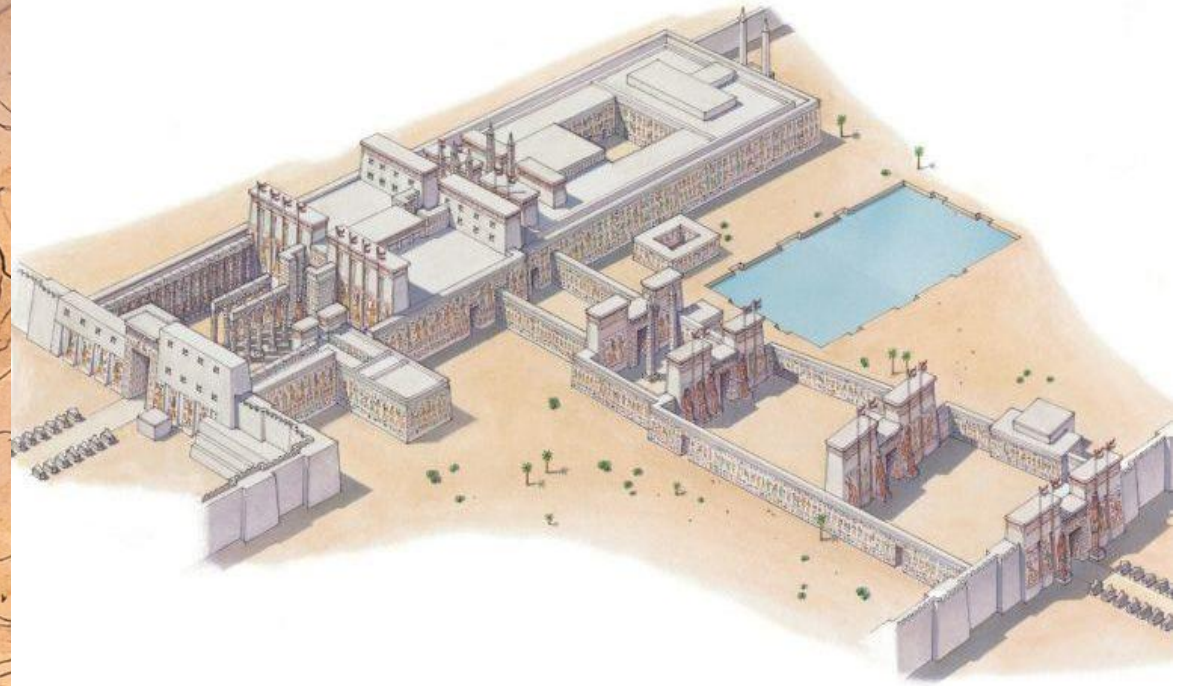


Standing inside the temple looking west: Sunset – Summer Solstice

Deir el Bahiri is aligned to the rising winter solstice sun, coming out of Karnak Temple



Karnak – is aligned to the setting summer solstice sun setting into Deir el Bahiri





Deir el Bahiri

Solstice Axis – Winter solstice
sun rise, summer solstice sunset

From the Egyptian cosmology
perspective this was the sky
goddess Nut – the extremes
of her position.



Karnak



Thebes – a sacred city of Ancient Egypt

- Held the major temple, Karnak, to Amun-Re.
- The base of the most powerful priest of Egypt – the First Prophet of Amun.
- The location of the Opet Festival – the major flooding of the Nile festival.
- Was the place of the Luxor Temple which was a celebration of the pharaonic soul and it being held by the mortal pharaoh.
- Was the location of the royal tombs on the New Kingdom – Valley of the Kings.
- Was a celebration of Nut and the Sun with the key temples orientated to celebrate it rising and setting at the solstice.



Reading list

- Belmonte, Juan Antonio, Mosalam Shaltout, and Magdi Fekri. "Astronomy, Landscape and Symbolism: A Study of the Orientation of Ancient Egyptian Temples." In *In Search of Cosmic Order, Selected Essays on Egyptian Archaeoastronomy* edited by Juan Antonio Belmonte and Mosalam Shaltout, 215- 83. Cairo: The Supreme Council of Antiquities Press, 2009.
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