

THIS BEAUTIFUL EARTH: PHOTO ESSAYS BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA 'ALLURE OF THE PYRAMIDS'

A deluge of brilliant yellow light. In the desert, the sun reigns supreme. The light and heat are so intense that if you look, your eyes burn; if you touch, your fingers will be scorched. Amid this sea of light, only the pyramids, jutting majestically toward the heavens, display an overwhelming resilience against the flaming heat.

Once called stairways to the sun, the pyramids are marvels of stone geometry. Looking up, one gets the sense that their summits are merging into the deep blue sky.

The Great Pyramid of King Khufu stands 451 feet tall. Extending in a line to the west are the pyramids of the kings Khafre and Menkaure.

The day was June 17, 1992, the time, past 3:00 p.m. We were 13 kilometers from Cairo, a city of 10 million. Driving through the city along the west bank of the Nile, one suddenly finds oneself in the desert. Ahead, atop a plateau, stand the three pyramids of Giza.

It was my first visit to Egypt and to see the pyramids in 30 years. Yet before these houses of eternity, 30 years amount to no more than an instant. The Egyptian people have a saying "Time laughs at everything; but the pyramids laugh at time." Standing before these monuments to eternal time, I felt a surge of emotion. "I, too, want to build an indestructible castle of capable people that will remain for all time!" I pledged to myself.

I was invited to a special guest house where Ms. Amal Samuel, chief inspector of the Giza Pyramid Zone, gave detailed answers to all my questions. From the house's broad picture window, we had a direct view of the pyramid of King Khafre. And directly before us were the lush branches of trees growing alongside the building.

Amid this world of stark colors, green alone means life. With all the life-energy they could muster, the trees were struggling intensely to live in the present moment.

The great stone pyramids signified death, eternity; the greenery was life, impermanence. Here was a mysterious expression of the undulating cycle of life and death that pervades the cosmos. Reflexively, I aimed my camera.

People, too, are like trees swaying in the winds of eternity. It is for this reason that we seek something eternal, something death cannot extinguish. We seek a power that is impervious to death, that can defeat death. It is this search that has given birth to religion and to art, and has made human beings human.

My old friend Mr. Hosni, the Egyptian minister of culture who had invited me to come, once said: "When I am thinking deeply, I stand before the pyramids. Then I feel something that transcends my everyday reality and is directed toward the universe. This I believe: There is a relationship that exists between the pyramids and the vast cosmos."

One recent hypothesis has it that there is a direct correspondence between the size and arrangement of the three pyramids of Giza and the positions and intensities of the three stars that make up the belt of the hunter in the constellation Orion. Indeed, the pyramids may well have been born of people's prayer and desire to bring the eternity of the stars to Earth's surface.

Modern research suggests that the pyramids were built from the spontaneous and intense passion of people of high intellect. Had they been built by slaves laboring reluctantly under the force of authority, they may have never withstood the ravages of time. The pyramids thus represent the people's self-imposed challenge to produce and leave behind a glorious edifice, a song of triumph, a paean to the pulsating law of the universe that tran-

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scends life and death.

“Let us leave behind this living proof!”

“Let us link ourselves to the eternal aspect of life!”

“If we call forth the limits of our human potential, what a magnificent thing we can build! We will show to future generations the real power of the people!”

The pyramids continue to ask us, “What is it that you will dedicate your life to; what will you leave behind?”

The pyramids stand as monuments to human accomplishment.

Three in a series

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