

ARCHITECTURE AS CONSTRUCTION OF A 'MUNDUS IMAGINALIS'. A WAY OF INTERPRETING FUNERARY BUILDINGS OF THE NEW KINGDOM

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The aim of this work is to underline one of the most important aspects of ancient architecture: to be considered as a primeval architecture in so far as it is a physical realisation of the *mundus imaginalis*. In order to be defined as such, architecture should refer not only to formal archetypes - as the shape of capitals or a specific layout in plan - but also to religious archetypes transposed into architectural features. A column, built in this "cosmic way", could be considered as Osiris' backbone rather than just a pillar, bearing not only the temple itself but the entire Cosmos. If built in that way, a temple or a tomb became a home of hierophanies, therefore a truly sacred space. The ancient Egyptian tombs of kings and nobles dating to the New Kingdom are analysed throughout this article with the purpose of underlying their points of contact. This essential equality must be researched in the common religious substrate, rather than in a - substantially non-existent - formal equality.

Firstly, the notion of *mundus imaginalis* will be given in relation to its theoretical origin to be further applied to primordial architecture. Then, a description of the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings and of the Theban tombs of the nobles will be outlined in light of this approach, with special attention regarding the symbolical meaning of the architectural elements. A special effort will be devoted to demonstrate how mythology and cosmogony served as real models - physical models - for the construction of these sacred spaces.

In conclusion, the intention of this paper is to suggest an alternative way to interpret the architecture of these funerary buildings beyond a modern system of typologies that has no effective relation with the past.