



VOCABULAIRE D'ARCHITECTURE EGYPTIENNE, by
Franck Monnier,* Bruxelles: Editions Safran, 2013.
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An interesting, practical and multi-disciplinary illustrated glossary was published some years ago, entitled *Vocabulaire d'architecture égyptienne* by Franck Monnier. This is a good specialized and informative source that explains the technical terms of ancient Egyptian architecture and its modern equivalents.

Because ancient Egypt is well known for its significant buildings and extraordinary architecture, it was necessary to analyze the architectural elements of such giant buildings in order to better understand their secrets and evolution. However, the description of ancient Egyptian architecture using classical or modern terms is a thorny matter. Thus, the convenient solution to understand an Egyptian architectural element, is to use a good glossary in order to find the modern adequate term, and to understand its appropriate use and context.

Over time, of course, a number of substantial publications have partially covered the field of the vocabulary of ancient Egyptian architecture, but it was in a subsidiary way, such as:

- Patricia Spencer: *Studies in the Lexicography of Ancient Egyptian Buildings and their Parts* (Ph.D. University College London, 1981).
- Patricia Spencer: *The Egyptian Temple: A Lexicographical Study* (London, 1984).
- Dieter Arnold: *Encyclopedia of ancient Egyptian architecture* (London-New York, 2003).

However, these earlier works are not comprehensive dictionaries, nor are they large-scale or involve a considerable detailed glossary. Moreover, Monnier clarified that some previous studies, in the most of the cases, included a selective list of frequently used terms, without paying attention to either a detailed description or an analytical/illustrated study of such terms. Besides, such technical terms were, in some cases, inappropriately adapted or used in ancient Egyptian architecture. For example, he referred to the use of word “pylon” that was borrowed from the Greek language to designate an ancient Egyptian architectural element.

This problem, according to Michel Azim in his preface to the present book, necessitated an elaborate, updated, multi-disciplinary and specialized glossary of ancient Egyptian

* I would like to thank William Joy to correct the English Language of this article.

architectural elements. The present glossary *Vocabulaire d'architecture égyptienne*, which is well-timed, fills a gap long noted in Egyptology.

Indeed, the work of Franck Monnier, *Vocabulaire d'architecture Égyptienne*, published by Editions Safran, considers a new step forward in this domain. Monnier, an engineer, has undertaken a long journey to achieve the current glossary. It involved study, work and experience, and specialization in the field of construction and architecture in ancient Egypt. He has also carried out extensive research on military and funerary architecture, and on mathematical and astronomical fields.

The aim of this glossary is not to describe all the architectural buildings of ancient Egypt, which would be an encyclopedic and voluminous work; on the contrary, it offers a lexicographical study of architectural terms that are used in architecture, construction, and decoration. In his work, Monnier analyzed attentively each term in order to fit it well within the appropriate architectural context and its use in ancient Egypt. It is therefore a matter of defining the meaning of certain terms or restoring their true signification where convenient. Sometimes, the author included terms that are not best-fits, however, their use became so common, that it would be useless to replace or eliminate them.

The glossary is remarkable in its format; it is easy to handle and features nearly two hundred illustrations. It is a very practical tool that use quickly makes essential. Monnier chose to not organize the vocabulary of the dictionary in alphabetical order, but listed topics thematically. The book contains a comprehensive list of architectural terms that includes around nine hundred words and expressions, and are divided into four main parts and an appendix, as follows:

1. the construction (p. 19-77);
2. the architectural arrangements (p. 79-133);
3. the architecture by type (p. 135-204);
4. the related arts (p. 205-228);
5. An appendix for mechanical terms (p. 224-228).

Dividing the book thematically gains additional benefit for the user. On one hand, there may be a wish to search for the definition of an unspecified term. In such a case, the alphabetical index at the end of the book (p. 249-285) will allow the user to find the result very quickly. In addition, this index presents the terms in English and ancient Egyptian in parallel. On the other hand, the reader can search for a term that best fits the description of an undefined architectural element. So, the thematic organization is convenient and lists successively all the terms linked to the same subject. At the same time, a thematic organization requires good quality for the illustrations. It was a challenge for the author to illustrate the technical terms without verbosity and monotony. Thus, Monnier produced, or edited himself, all of the drawings, using traditional techniques as well as digital and 3D drawings. In addition, we also find synthetic illustrations that make it possible to jointly visualize different terms linked to the same structure. For example, the author included some architectural archetypes to explain the individual monument, for example, the mortuary temple of the sixth Dynasty (fig. 73, p. 175).

Each chapter is thematically subdivided in order to give access to the entries themselves. Franck Monnier listed the necessary and related terms for each sub-group, as follow: 1.

materials (different types of stone and its basic substance); 2. masonry elements which are elements that have six faces, two ends, and two sides, (for example: clamp, fillet stone, coating, mortar, ashlar, and stucco); 3. masonry (such as: course, filling, air channels and paving); 4. structure and masonry of a pyramid (such as: accretion, backing stone, mass, slope, pyramidion and trench); 5. wall (such as: plump, strengthening wall, and recessed wall); 6. construction with wood and vegetal elements (such as: pole, mat, beam and tenon); 7. construction processes and elements (such as rocker, foundation deposit, construction shaft, ramp, and level socket); 8. size and condition of the stone (such as: lip, gauging, transport boss, quarry, and cleaving).

In the second chapter “architectural design”, Monnier describes the different elements of architectural design such as 9. (doors, windows, light opening, and ventilation openings), 10. stairs (stairways and steps), 11. roofing (roof slab), 12. vertical supports (columns, pillars and pilasters). In this sub-group, Monnier explains that the supports adopted in Egyptian architecture reveal a great diversity of forms and ornamentation; however, the vocabulary that are used to describe them, are borrowed from the terminology of classical architecture, but with an adaptation. For example, all the Egyptian columns have smooth shafts, but there are two different types of capitals: bud shaped and bell shaped.

Moreover, in section 13. ceiling, Monnier discusses the terms related to ceilings (such as vault, cupola, and arch). In this regard, he cautions readers to not confuse between ceiling and roofing; the ceiling is the internal coverage, meanwhile, the roofing is the external coverage of a building.

The third chapter lists the types of ancient Egyptian architecture. In sub-group 14. (religious architecture) the author clarifies that the terms of religious architecture in ancient Egypt are borrowed from the Greek architecture vocabulary. In this regard, some terms were used at the expense of others, and their use became common, such as the term “naos”. The term “naos” designates the place inside the temple that is reserved for the material manifestation of the divinity; however, in architecture, it designates a small edifice (aedicule) in the cella. In sub-group 15. (funerary architecture), Monnier lists and explains some important terms (such as cenotaph, causeway, funerary cone, air shaft, closure, pyramid, tomb, temple, and burial pits). Further, In sub-group 16. (civil architecture), he describes the related terms to civil architecture in ancient Egypt. He first lists the terms connected with “houses and palaces” (such as antechamber, apartment, chamber, corridor, dwelling, floor, and gallery). Then, in the second, part, he mentions the terms related to the “production processes” (such as magazine, crucible, furnaces, and granaries). In the third part, the author clarifies skillfully the technical and related terms of “water controlling” in ancient Egypt (aqueduct, basin, pipe, drainage, sewer, and wells). Finally, the he ends this sub-group with a part on “roads, ports and quay”. The sub-group 17. (military architecture) is a highly standard part of this book as the author is one of the experts and pioneers in this field.

As mentioned above, some terms are correctly used to designate the ancient Egyptian military architecture, meanwhile, some others are inappropriately used. For example, the term “rampart” is a support wall that is used in the fortification, then it is adapted to designate the first defense wall that is found in Nubian forts of the Middle Kingdom. Indeed, the author gives detailed descriptions of each term, together with a comparison to the modern military terms. Different military terms were discussed (such as camp, bastion, fortress, migdol, and towers).

In the fourth chapter, the author discusses the terms related to “related arts”. In this chapter, he divides it to two sub-groups: 18. Decoration and molding and 19. statues, stela and obelisks. In the first group, he explains important and necessary terms related to this art (such as torus, molding, chamfer, cornice, friezes, fluting, cavetto, and drum). Sometime, Monnier rejected some traditional Egyptological architectural terms. This is the case with the term “torus” (p. 210), to which he explains its initial meaning, as linked to a circular path, thus, excluding its use for certain temple moldings or false doors. He then suggests an alternative term that is “torus moulding” (p. 207). In the second sub-group 19. (statues, stela and obelisks), he mentions that the terms related to the statuary, particularly the sphinx, are varying between specialists. Some terms are listed (such as bust, pedestal, dorsal pillar, monumental scarab, block statue, stela-bearing statue, theophoric statue and zoomorphic statue).

Finally, an appendix of technical terms was added to enrich this important book. The appendix is defined as chapter 20. It is necessary to understand some essential technical terms, as follows: A) deformations (such as sinking, bulging, blistering), B) forces which mean an action that is undertaken by an object over another (such as traction, friction, thrust), C) stability organs, which refers to a monolith piece of masonry that assures the stability of a building (such as shore, stiffener, prop, shoulder), D) stress or solicitation which refers to the way of exerting an action or force over a solid object (such as shear, compression, and tension).

Monnier arranged each term so as to give a number of indications regarding the syntactic use of the word. In addition to its nature and genre, the term was contextualized in order to better understand its use. The definition was, then, followed with a description of the object/building/action as explicitly as possible. The synonyms are systematically mentioned. Certain entries are subdivided into sub-categories to refer to the distinction between them. Whenever necessary, an illustration specifies the different sub-terms of an entry, for example, the different types of walls in pages 61 (fig. 15). Moreover, each term was accompanied with its etymology. In the meantime, Monnier was aware of the uniqueness of ancient Egyptian architectural terms; thus, he wouldn't change any terms that have been widely accepted and used in the world of Egyptology for many years. For example, the term “enclosure” is a term used in military architecture. It designates a construction of a defensive nature; however, Monnier preferred to broaden its use, to describe constructions with a religious or funerary use (p. 164-165).

It is also noteworthy that the talented Franck Monnier created all the graphic illustrations featured in the book, something he did previously in his beautiful work on Egyptian fortresses. This ensures a perfect match between text and image. He has made an essential rule not to limit his work to the French language, but he added English, and, where applicable, the ancient Egyptian equivalences, and lexicons that facilitate their use. There are also very useful inputs of brief notices entitled “Details”. These are highlighted with a grey background at the beginning of each chapter, where the author gives an introduction for terms that he will explain.

To further facilitate the use of this book, the author provided it with an Egypto-French lexicon. This lexicon lists in an alphabetical order all the ancient Egyptian terms mentioned in the book (p. 229-236). Then, there is a list of references for those seeking to deepen their knowledge in the field of architectural terms.

The Egyptological community may not easily accept the new terms as suggested by Monnier, and it is also possible that we may find opposed opinions in the future, criticizing his new thoughts.

To sum up, I think that Monnier missed consulting two essential references: Alfred Lucas, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* (London, 1962), John Raymond Harris, *Lexicographical Studies in Ancient Egyptian Minerals, Veröffentlichung 54* (Berlin, 1961). I just would like to compare one chapter of Harris's book. He included a detailed chapter (no. 3) on building and monumental stone. Harris gave important analysis on the different stones that were used in ancient Egypt, besides their types and names in the ancient Egyptian language. Thus I think Monnier missed an opportunity to include more stone names following Harris's work. In addition, Monnier's work missed including the semi-precious stones and minerals, similarly to Harris's work (chapters 5 and 7). It is possible that the semi-precious stones and minerals are not directly related to the architectural vocabulary; however, I believe it would be more informative to list some examples such as turquoise, and lapis-lazuli.

I consider the current work a real inventory and an extraordinary update of the vocabulary of ancient Egyptian architecture. It considers a new research tool which satisfies a persistent need in the field of ancient Egyptian architecture, and this will be useful for amateurs, professionals, students, scholars, Egyptologists, civil engineers, architects and archeologists.