

A. THE CAUSEWAY

For the building of each pyramid and its temples it was necessary to have a firm sloping causeway on which one could pull up the building materials which had been moved on rafts up to the foot of the hill during the times of flood. In our case, one had used the tongue of the rock which stretched from the pyramid plateau down into the valley as a natural causeway. And as it does not run precisely eastward, but rather east/southeastward, this determines the slanted angle of the Causeway and the relative positions of the funerary temple and the Valley Temple.

On this Causeway, as at the Abusir precinct, was erected a covered passage which was supposed to create the connection between the Valley Temple and the funerary temple. It starts, as already mentioned, in the Valley Temple, in the northwestern corner of the horizontal nave, and runs from there in a straight line up to the temple where it ends suddenly at the anteroom. Its beginning and end therefore do not develop in the axis of the main rooms but are shifted to subordinate architectural locations. The Valley Temple was therefore, according to its design, not only the entrance to the Causeway and the funerary temple, but also had its own significance and evidently also served individual cult purposes.

The passage itself is a narrow and rather dark corridor which ascends with a slope of about 1:11. For the small requirements of lighting of the ancient Egyptians, narrow slit windows which may well have been situated in the ceiling plates might have sufficed. Such a lighting system from above had obviously a drawback that during rain, water easily penetrated which then ran along the floor in a small rivulet and would then have collected in the rooms of the Valley Temple, had one not collected it below at the end of the Causeway via a small channel in the floor, and led through the thick walls into the open.

The Causeway is characterised as a utilitarian construction; it is built outside and inside completely out of white unadorned limestone. Reliefs on the inner walls of causeways are only found in the Fifth Dynasty. It walls are rather thick, on the outside slightly sloping, and at the top closed off with the usual semicircular shape. Its length is 494.6 meters.