

AN ISLAND NATION

A Kit Kat Paper

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I wish you a Happy New Year. Last summer our President, Jim Ginter, was looking for volunteers to fill the final spot in this year's presenter list. I had prepared a paper which I thought I could use, but it would require acceptance by the president to forgo the unwritten Kit Kat law that precludes a speaker talking about their line of work, in my case, architecture. Mr. Ginter accepted my request and thus completed his list of presenters for the 2017-2018 year.

I want to thank architect Novere Musson who first invited me to a Kit Kat meeting in the late 70's or early 80's. I would also like to thank my sponsor and dear friend Denny Griffith.

The title of my paper is "An Island Nation". As I considered what I was going to say, the contemporary topics of *Difference and Diversity* called me. Difference used in architectural design provides interest to a concept. Consider windows punched into a wall of a Renaissance facade. Each window head or top is usually square with a pediment above it, and to show difference, uniqueness and interest, one pediment could be a gable the next window pediment could have a quarter segment of a circle. Using architect speak this is described as an A and B rhythm. By definition, difference is "a point or way in which people or things are not the same",¹ diversity is "the condition of

¹ English-Oxford Living Dictionaries

having or being composed of differing elements: variety; especially the inclusion of different types of people, of different races or cultures in a group or organization.²

An island, as in an island nation, is a “tract of land surrounded by water and smaller than a continent”.³ The island nation I will talk about is formed differently. My island nation is water surrounded by land. The nation of this paper uses the water for survival, whereas island nations such as England use the water as protection from aggressors. The difference of these two geographies is that one is surrounded by land the other is surrounded by water. Considering this difference and your concept of an island may become more interesting. My Island Nation has existed for over 5000 years and was for 3000 years a very developed country that was somewhat of an isolationist. The Country is Egypt. It exists because of the Nile. The Nile is one of the few rivers in the Northern Hemisphere that flows south to north. For example to go up river is to go south which is usually down or north in our hemisphere. Egypt was for centuries protected by vast deserts on either side of the Nile. The Mediterranean is the northern boundary, but the Nile is separated from the Mediterranean by a Delta which disguises its existence to the south. To the south of Egypt where the Nile originates there are mountains, jungles and six major cataracts or rapids that discourage if not prevent navigation into Egypt. So there Egypt sat for centuries, surrounded by desert, marshes and cataracts developing its culture with little interference of other nations.

My interest in Egypt was originally not with its history or geography but with the architecture. The simple forms of the pyramids, unfettered without ornamentation and

² Merriam Webster Dictionary

³ Merriam Webster Dictionary

decoration are very appealing to me. A pyramid is made from a square. It has its midpoint located by the intersection of diagonal lines drawn from the corners. Grab a hold of the midpoint and pull it up in the third dimension and you have created a pyramid. The pyramid was chosen by the Egyptians from 3000 to 1500 B.C. as the architecture form to cover and mark the burial point of a deceased ruler. It is one of the most elegant and iconic forms built by man. A structure not occupied by the living, but a tribute to its deceased occupant, the pyramid is a vertical object always built on the west side of the Nile where it could be embellished by the setting sun. There were over 100 pyramids built in about 1500 years.

Vincent Scully a renowned architectural historian of the last century wrote a book titled "Architecture, The Natural and the Man Made" in which he theorizes about the origin of form created in nature. Mr. Scully writes: "...The first fact of architecture is the topography of a place and the way human beings respond to it with their own constructed forms. Do they attempt, for example, to echo the shapes of the landscape or to contrast with them?". He goes on to generalize by writing "that all pre-Greek or non Greek cultures chose the first alternative and the Greeks more or less invented the second".⁴ To illustrate this concept, Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie Architecture with its strong horizontal lines is an example of using the horizontal prairie to influence the design of a building, while LeCorbusier's Villa Savoye is an example of contrasting with the landscape by raising the house on columns and letting the ground flow freely underneath. A mountain grows out of the earth and reaches for the sky and symbolically connects heaven and earth or literally earth and sky. Humankind has for centuries used

⁴ "Architecture" by Vincent Scully, St. Martin's Press 1991 p. 1.

this spiritual connection to guide its constructed forms. The Pyramids of Egypt, although not in a natural environment of mountains, evoke a spiritual awe of reaching from earth to sky. We have in Renaissance art a similar spiritual awe in Michelangelo's 4th of 9 panels of the Sistine Chapel ceiling, where the fingers of man and God reach for connection.

Pyramids reach for the heavens from earth. The Step Pyramid of Djoser (2667-2648B.C.) which closely resembles the earlier ziggurat of Ur on the Tigris Euphrates River is composed of a complex series of mastabas. Mastabas are rectangular structures usually made of bricks with sloping sides and a flat top. They were used to cover or mark a burial place. The Step Pyramid can be seen as a series of six mastabas stacked on top of one another. The pyramids of Giza are the sophisticated evolution of the Step Pyramid with the notch between mastaba layers filled in making a smooth surface, a pyramid. The magnificent and minimalist pyramids of Giza on the west bank of the Nile identify the burial place of the father (Cheops or Khufu) 2558-2532B.C., his son (Chephren or Khafre) 2532-2503B.C. and his grandson (Mycerinus or Menkaura) 2532-2503B.C. Critically located below this magnificent group of Pyramids, carved from one stone is the Sphinx, the lion bodied Pharaoh Khafre.

Westerners locked in realism and literalism rather than mystery and spirit ask questions about the pyramids seeking factual answers: How long did it take to build a pyramid? How were they constructed? Because we have not uncovered texts to provide these answers we use our insufficient powers of deduction. Logic would suggest that It took about 20 to 40 years to build a pyramid. If it took longer than the pharaoh's life he would be dependent on his successor to complete his tomb. Most intelligent and realistic rulers

would not count on such good fortune. There are several theories about how the pyramids were built. The most credible theories involve an earthen ramp on which the huge limestone stone blocks could be pushed up. We had a wonderful tourist guide at Giza, who showed us a ramp adjacent to Khafre which he said was evidence of this theory. The pyramids all had a north south orientation. The outside of the pyramids had no adornment, but the rooms inside were adorned with frescos and carvings. For over 3,000 years of Egyptian culture, the art and writings remained in the same style. Our Eurocentric art has evolved from Greek to Roman to Romanesque to Renaissance. Egyptian art was done by thousands of artisans year after year carving and decorating the tombs and temples with similar images and styles, repeating what their father and his father had done before them. I wonder what happened to the gold, gems, garments and objects buried with the Pharaoh? Someone with a sense of humor may suggest that a Pharaoh robbed his predecessors' grave to embellish his own tomb rather than spend his own money to collect treasures. So the tombs were possibly not emptied by grave robbers, but by succeeding Pharaohs. Most of the limestone building blocks were quarried nearby and floated on the Nile to lagoons dug close to the construction site. Granite that covered the pyramid was floated down the Nile from Nubia. An enormous amount of labor and money was required to build the pyramids. A city for workers has been uncovered near the pyramid of Khafre proving that many people lived and worked near the pyramid.

Prior to the Egyptian Kingdom there were independent City-States on the Nile. Narmer united the City States in 3100B.C. into what we now call Egypt. The chronology of Egyptian history is based on "a general outline of dynasties by the Greek writer

Manetho in 300B.C.”⁵. He divided Egyptian history into families of rulers⁶, and that system has not been altered even after further discoveries. Egypt was ruled by descendants of Pharaoh’s from 3100B.C. until Alexander the Great, a Greek, who conquered Egypt in 332B.C. With the death of the Greek Cleopatra, the Roman Period began in 30B.C. and ended with fall of the Roman Empire. It is interesting that during the Ptolemaic Period (332-30B.C.) the Greeks ruled and built as Egyptian Pharaohs would. They did not rule and build as you would think Greeks would with their history of Democracy and the temple architecture of the Parthenon.

The Pharaohs were rulers, but they were also worshiped. They were God, a divine king. Over time pharaohs lost some of their importance as they delegated more ritual duties to priests. With the decline of Pharaohs administering worship was the rise of Temples. Around 1500B.C. temples replaced pyramids as the predominant architecture. Temples were places of ritual unlike pyramids which were places of burial. The temples were architecturally different than the pyramids as the temple was entered through a pylon which divided one place from another, whereas there was seemingly no entrance to a pyramid. The temples after 1570B.C. were organized around an axis rather than a courtyard. The temples had secluded chambers controlled by priests, there were statues of kings and obelisks cut from single pieces of granite. The architectural design changed from the solid form of the pyramids to the airy courtyards enclosed by arcades of columns and beams. There was no logical architectural transition from pyramid to temple as experienced in Christian architecture when the pilasters of the Romanesque

⁵ Temples, Tombs & Hieroglyphs, A Popular History of Ancient Egypt by Barbara Mertz, Harper, 1964, 2007, p. XIX
Editors Note

⁶ Ibid p.XIX

morphed into the flying buttresses of the Gothic. Possibly this abrupt change was because of the enormous cost of construction and the deterioration of engineering techniques. Although citizens were invited to the temples they were not places of congregation, but places of veneration to the Gods of which Ra, the sun god was most prevalent. The pylons that announce the entry to the temple and separated the courtyards within the temple were said to use the metaphor of mountain, that as Mr. Scully proposes is the dominate landscape form influencing architecture. The pylons are derived from two mountains separated to provide an entry and held apart by Ra the sun God. Throughout architectural history there is a recurring importance of the relationship to landscape and particularly to mountains.

The differences that occur in architecture give richness, diversity, and contribute to a more interesting life. Recognizing the differences that occur in architecture encourage me to study culture, history and art.

Segueing from differences in architecture, I would like to use the importance of accepting differences by discussing how the evolution of the earths' population has led to a challenge of living with each other. Warren Tyler's paper, "Homeland Security in April 2006", made us aware that differences have led to profiling which has become a polarizing issue in today's culture.

In 3000B.C. there were 14 million people living on the earth's 57,268,900 square miles of land; that is 0.244 people per square mile or 0.00038 people per acre. In 1900 there were 1,600,000,000 people, 27.938 people per square mile, 43.653 people per acre. In 2017 there were 7,555,000,000 people, 131,921 people per square mile, 206,127

people per acre. The obvious observation is that with the growth of the world's population we are forced to live closer together. We are and will be in each others' face. We will need to relate to each other to survive. We can no longer migrate to another area of the planet to get away from people.

Complicating living closer to each other is that there are more people of different race and cultures living closer to each other. By accepting people who are less fortunate and those who are persecuted; by wanting people to come to America to support industry, commerce and agriculture, we have brought challenges of living together. Difference in people has always existed but we have not needed to live near them. Difference existed among the Native American Indians. When the English, French and Spanish settled in America in the late 1500's, the difference became more acute. The English settled Roanoke Island in 1580 and Jamestown in 1606. The Spanish settled in Florida.. The French settled along the Atlantic Coast from Newfoundland to Cape Cod, The Dutch in New York in 1621 and the Puritans at Plymouth Rock in 1620. Note that none of the Europeans chose to live with each other initially. The number of cultures living near each other was increasing. What would happen? Could they live with each other?

To make the different people living near each other more complicated was that the European settlers needed labor, the Spanish choose to enslave Native American Indians, and the English in Virginia used indentured servitude. African slaves were used by all. In 1619 the shipping of slaves began when 20 slaves were brought to Jamestown to work in the tobacco fields. By the end of the 18th century there were 6-7 million African American slaves in the United States, and most worked on the tobacco, rice and

indigo plantations. Today there are 333,000,000 people in the United States; about 50 million are African Americans.

With more and more people living, working and playing near each other, and with the diversity of these people ever increasing, (13.3%African American,, 17.8%Hispanic, 5.7 % Asian, 61.3% White and 2.6% Middle Eastern, Indian and other)⁷ we are now discussing ways to not allow, or to decrease the amount of immigrants allowed into our country. We are also considering ways to have citizens and immigrants, who are generally not Caucasian be deported from the United States. Immigrants to the United States from the middle 1800's to the middle 1900's were primarily Caucasian. Since the mid 1900's immigrants have not been primarily Caucasian.

Robert Jones research in his book "The End of White Christian America" identifies that since 1960 the Protestant faith is becoming less Caucasian.⁸ I remember my grandmother, a Presbyterian of Scottish decent, who lived in the coal country of Eastern PA, cursing the influx of Italian Catholics to her neighborhood. The number of different cultures and different ethnic groups immigrating to the United States has accelerated in the last 50 years. The number of immigrants has increased to meet labor shortages in the United States, similar to the labor shortage the settlers faced in the 1700's. Immigration has increased to accept people who are facing poverty, oppression or natural disasters. These are the same reasons the settlers came to North America in the 1600's. We have accepted the number of immigrants to support our economic appetite, but also because of our compassion and acceptance of others. The United

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, Census.Gov

⁸ "The End of White Christian America", Robert P. Jones, Simon & Schuster 2016, p.47

States faces the challenge to make laws that will allow us to be compassionate to those in need, while not jeopardizing the jobs held and needed for U.S. citizens. The differences in the cultural mix will keep increasing in our country and throughout the world. We need to find a way to live with rather than ignore these differences. We cannot isolate ourselves as the Egyptians were able to do. Earth is not getting any bigger while the population grows. The people of earth must learn to live with each other.

Recognizing yesterday's observance of Dr. Martin Luther King, jr., and the call of this paper, I will close with a quote from him. "Man must evolve a method for all human conflict which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love."⁹

⁹ Nobel Prize for Peace acceptance speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, jr. in Oslo Norway December 10,1964, third paragraph