

PYRAMID STUDIES AND  
OTHER ESSAYS

PYRAMID STUDIES AND OTHER ESSAYS  
PRESENTED TO I. E. S. EDWARDS

WITH  
AFFECTION AND RESPECT



I. E. S. Edwards

OCCASIONAL PUBLICATIONS

7

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AND OTHER ESSAYS  
PRESENTED TO  
I. E. S. EDWARDS

Edited by  
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## AN EARLY IMAGE-OF-THE-KING

By CYRIL ALDRED

AMONG the supreme masterpieces of animal sculpture from the ancient world must surely be numbered the Prudhoe lions which Eiddon Edwards lately had under his charge, and on which he wrote authoritatively.<sup>1</sup> The role of the lion in Egypt, and its mutant the sphinx, as protector of thresholds is well established, a myth that has passed into European art, as exemplified for instance in one of its latest manifestations by the lions of Sir George Frampton that guard the entrance to the King Edward VIIth Galleries of the institution where Edwards pre-eminently discharged his official duties for so many years. In tribute to him as a colleague and friend for half a century, I offer the following feuilletton, recalling with gratitude many occasions on which his help and support have lightened my own less onerous burdens.

### I

The Department of History and Applied Arts of the Royal Museum of Scotland<sup>2</sup> has recently acquired an Egyptian statuette of a sphinx with fore-paws in the form of human hands holding *nw*-pots (pl. 8a–c).<sup>3</sup> The material has been identified by the Geological Laboratory of the Museum as chlorite-actinolite schist, a dense, rusty-black stone which takes a high polish. I am indebted to Dr Elizabeth Goring, a curator in the Museum, for supplying many particulars, and to the Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland for permission to publish this piece.

At the time of its sale, it was still mounted on a rectangular ivory plinth of nineteenth-century design, with sunken panels on each of the four faces edged with foliated borders. To the underside was attached a small label with crabbed writing which has been deciphered by Dr Goring and elucidated by Dr Morris Bierbrier of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities in the British Museum. My thanks are extended to both these scholars for giving me valuable information about the recent history of this object.

The label, which is written in ink on paper embossed with a coronet and the monogram M A, reads as follows:

Antique sphinx. Basalt. Given to Lady/ M A by Mr Larking of Alexandria in/ the year 1849. Portrait of Mer-en-Ra/ of 6th Dynasty. King of Upper and Lower Egypt/ Hieroglyphs of small cartouche between the/ hands holding wine cups—also the/ cartouche under the plinth cut (*sic*) with/ the following titles/ Mer-en-Ra/ King of Upper and Lower Egypt/ who loves the Gods/ Lord of the Temple<sup>4</sup>/ This is an exquisite sphinx and quite/ perfect—of an age of remotest

<sup>1</sup> 'The Prudhoe Lions', *LAAA* 26 (1939), 3–9.

<sup>2</sup> In October 1985, this name was adopted for the institution previously called The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.

<sup>3</sup> Reg. no. 1984.405: L. 5.7, W. 1.8, H. 3.2 cm; ex-Brownlow Coll. Christie's Antiquities Sale, *Catalogue*, 11th July 1984, Lot 176 (2 illus.).

<sup>4</sup> The inscription would be more accurately rendered (underside of plinth): 'The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Merenrē, beloved of the God who is Lord of the Great Mansion (of Rē-Herakhte in Heliopolis)'. See ref. in n. 44 below. On the upper surface of the plinth between the forepaws, 'The King of Upper and Lower Egypt Merenrē, Giver of Life'.

Antiquity./ By some calculations it may be 3300/ years old. Mentioned in Rawlinson's/ Herodotus.<sup>5</sup>

Dr Bierbrier has identified the monogram as referring to Lady Marianne Alford (née Compton), the daughter of the 2nd Marquess of Northampton, who married Viscount Alford, son and heir of the 1st Earl Brownlow in 1841. Because of his poor health he and his wife spent the winter of 1849–50 in Egypt, and his father-in-law appears to have been of the party. Lord Alford died in the following year. It would seem therefore that Mr Larking presented the sphinx to Lady Alford on the occasion of her visit to Alexandria late in 1849.

The name and connotations of the Northampton family will be well known to most readers of these pages. The 2nd Marquess was a Trustee of the British Museum, and gave antiquities to it in 1852 after his return from the Egyptian tour in company with Lord and Lady Alford.<sup>6</sup> The label was obviously penned by someone conversant with the subject, and may be written in the difficult hand of the 2nd Marquess himself; but this is a line of enquiry which has not proved convenient to pursue: the matter is not important. What the label does establish is that the sphinx was in private possession in 1849, and apart from Rawlinson's mention of it in his *Herodotus* has remained in obscurity ever since. At the date when it was given to Lady Alford no Old-Kingdom royal sculpture had been brought to light. The first such antiquity to be exposed to public view was the seated diorite Khephren discovered in the pit in the king's Valley Temple at Giza by Mariette during his initial clearance in 1858. There can be no question, therefore, that the Alford sphinx is a confection of the nineteenth century with details copied from Old-Kingdom models.

In subjecting this sphinx to a stylistic analysis that its singular nature seems to demand, the observer experiences a certain handicap in as much as no comparable piece of this period has yet been exhibited to general scrutiny.<sup>7</sup> The Great Sphinx of Giza is on too gigantic a scale, too ruined and too much restored to provide reliable data. The sphinx-head attribute to Radjedef<sup>8</sup> is also fragmentary, lacks a body, and is therefore somewhat controversial.<sup>9</sup> The small damaged sphinx in the Pushkin Museum, Moscow, published by Turaiev,<sup>10</sup> however, furnishes the nearest parallel in size, date and material, and is also evidently of '(Mer)enre, (beloved) of the Spirits of Heliopolis'. But it differs from the classic form in being wholly leonine with a human mask lacking a beard. Incidentally, this specimen seems to be the first known example of the 'Tanis' type of sphinx, and is another instance of the originality of the VIth Dynasty sculptors in extending the iconography of royal statuary.

There are, however, certain features in the Alford sphinx which in comparison with subsequent specimens of the genre are seen to be normal. The muscular body is

<sup>5</sup> G. Rawlinson, *History of Herodotus* II (3rd ed., London, 1875), 263 n. 1.

<sup>6</sup> I.e. coffin-lid, Late Period, no. 790: stela, Roman, no. 789.

<sup>7</sup> The sphinx of Phiops I, mentioned by J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne* III (Paris, 1958), 38 n. 3, has apparently not yet come into public view.

<sup>8</sup> Louvre E 12626, Vandier, op. cit. pl. I, 2; C. M. Zivie, *L'A V*, 1145, n. 12.

<sup>9</sup> I exclude from consideration the fragmentary plinth of Phiops I in Cairo (CG 541), and also the crude mud figurine excavated by the Austrian Expedition at Giza, 1971–5 (K. Kromer, *Siedlungsfunde aus dem frühen Alten Reich* [Vienna, 1978], 88, fig. 27). This votive, if of Old Kingdom date, and not an intrusion from Roman levels, clearly does not represent a king, and has nothing of the pose and attributes of a sphinx.

<sup>10</sup> B. A. Turaiev, *Opisanie egipetskago sobraniya I. Statui i statuetki Golenishchevskago sobraniya*, (Musei Izyashchnykh Iskusstv im. Imp. Alexandra III pri Moskovskom Universitete; Petrograd, 1917), (*Catalogue of the Egyptian Collection, I. Statues and statuettes of the Golenishchev Collection*, [Alexander III Museum of Fine Arts at Moscow University]), 78, no. 117. I am indebted to Dr H. G. Fischer for bringing this piece to my notice.

characteristically leonine. The dominant mass of the haunch muscle is well emphasized, and the notch marking the articulation of the rear leg is visible. The tail with a bulbous tuft of hair at its tip curls to the right between haunch and flank,<sup>11</sup> and is not carried over the back as in archaic examples.<sup>12</sup> The stylized hair of the mane is carefully defined in lunate masses on the shoulders, and the muscles of the forelegs are well modelled. The folds of skin connecting haunches and forelegs to the flanks are not so pronounced as generally in later examples; but it is fair to say, having regard to its small scale, that the body of a powerful lion has been realistically rendered, and the transition from feline paw to human hand has been skilfully managed.

The prime stylistic traits, however, are almost exclusively confined to the head, and a comparison with heads from Old-Kingdom royal statues will show a number of correspondences. Most striking, of course, is the beard which projects in a wedge-shape exclusive to statues of Old-Kingdom kings, having the tip cut back at an acute angle.<sup>13</sup> All complete beards that the writer has been able to trace on statues of kings from Khephren to Phiops II have this form with bold ribbing on the outer cambered face. The pattern on the Alford sphinx is somewhat massive as in most sphinxes. After the Old Kingdom the beard is narrower in proportion, hangs more vertically, and the infill extends horizontally to the chest.<sup>14</sup> The pattern began with Nebhepetre<sup>c</sup>,<sup>15</sup> and is well established by Sesotris I at Lisht.<sup>16</sup> The Old-Kingdom fashion was not revived at subsequent periods, either in sphinxes or statues of kings, probably because the projecting tip was subject to breakage during manufacture or use, and surviving examples either show the tip missing or dispense with the beard completely. The fact that Tuthmosis IV apparently had to restore the beard of the Great Sphinx at Giza may be significant.<sup>17</sup>

The *nemes* headcloth is shown on a very modest scale in the Alford sphinx, but the main features are plain enough. With very slight peaks at the corners, lappets following the curve of the shoulder, a somewhat shallow crown, a narrow horizontal diadem, and a long ribbed pigtail, it corresponds closely with the headdress worn by the kneeling Phiops I in Brooklyn.<sup>18</sup> But it differs from it in having stripes limited to the lappets, as in the Vth Dynasty mode, although it is distinguished from that fashion by having the front profile curved and not flat-topped.<sup>19</sup> The infant Phiops I held in his mother's lap in the Brooklyn pair-statue also wears a *nemes* of similar pattern, except that its lappets converge.<sup>20</sup> Minute detail cannot be expected on a carving of this size in such a hard stone, but nevertheless the uraeus is seen to undulate across the crown of the head and to terminate at the occiput similar to the example worn by Phiops II in the Cairo statuette of the King as a child.<sup>21</sup>

The face is boldly carved with a bossy chin and wide cheeks, large staring eyes with pronounced cosmetic lines,<sup>22</sup> and thick eyebrows with a slight arch, and a prominent

<sup>11</sup> H. G. Fischer, *The Orientation of Hieroglyphs*, I (New York, 1977), 8.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Berlin Staatliche Museen 22440: MMA, Gallatin Coll. no. 1.

<sup>13</sup> H. G. Evers, *Staat aus dem Stein*, II (Munich, 1929), 9 § 44.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 8 § 36.

<sup>15</sup> Cairo, JE 36195, Vandier op. cit. pl. LVI, 1, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Cairo CG 411-20.

<sup>17</sup> PM III<sup>1</sup>, 37 Cairo, JE 57119.

<sup>18</sup> Brooklyn 39.121; Vandier, op. cit. pl. VIII, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Cairo CG 30, 38, 42, JE 52501. MMA 18.2.4. B. V. Bothmer *MDAIK* 30 (1974), 165-70.

<sup>20</sup> Brooklyn 39.100, Vandier, op. cit. pl. VIII, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Cairo, JE 50616, *ibid.*, pl. IX, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Such cosmetic lines, which are restricted to royal statues in the Old Kingdom, appear around the eyes from the reign of Khephren, and are sporadic thereafter in Dyn. IV. They are exceptional in Dyn. V, and in favour again in Dyn. VI.

smiling mouth. These are also the physiognomic peculiarities of the portraits of Phiops I in Brooklyn and Cairo, and that of the fragmentary head in the Louvre attributed to Phiops I by H. W. Müller.<sup>23</sup> The hands holding the libation pots resemble those of the kneeling Phiops I in Brooklyn, having the fingers cupped in a great curve, but they differ from them in having the joints articulated by folds, and the finger-nails long and almond-shaped, almost like lion-claws, as though a hybrid between the king of men and the king of beasts was in the sculptor's consciousness. The pots, too, in both these statuettes are carved with thick, distinct rims and as though hollowed out. This is worthy of remark because such kneeling figures, even on a colossal scale, thereafter at all periods reveal, with one or two aberrant exceptions, the donor presenting pots with vestigial rims and orifices occluded by thin lids.<sup>24</sup>

To sum up, despite the miniature scale of the carving in a hard stone, the Alford sphinx has resemblances in the portraiture and its stylistic features that place it securely in the context of the VIth Dynasty, in harmony with the titulary inscribed upon it. As an Old-Kingdom statuette of a sphinx making a libation, it is indeed a novelty, but not more so than other royal statues of the same period, which as the Cairo and Brooklyn examples show, depart from the conventional poses of the few royal statues of earlier date that have survived even in fragmentary condition. For this reason some doubts have been voiced as to the exact date of this sphinx, despite the circumstances of its discovery in recent times. Auction-room gossip at the time of its sale was apt to dismiss it either as of New Kingdom date, on the score of its pose and the form of its glyphs, or as of seventh–sixth century date BC, reflecting the archaizing style of the Saite period with its predilection for copying Old-Kingdom models.

So far, the posthumous cult of Merenrē I, who had a brief reign of not more than five years and may not in fact have enjoyed independent rule,<sup>25</sup> has not been attested, and a revival seems highly unlikely, if not quite impossible. A restoration of his monuments in the New Kingdom seems equally unlikely. By then his pyramid was badly ruined; and while in Ramesside times Prince Kha'emwese undertook a certain amount of restoration in the Saqqara necropolis, he left the pyramid of Merenrē unmarked.

Moreover, the stylistic features of New Kingdom sphinxes are distinctive and differ markedly from those of earlier specimens, apart from the portraiture. The uraeus usually has double coils indicated behind the hood, and generally the two *nw*-pots are replaced by a single large libation-jar. In order to hold this in an appropriate grip, the forearms have to be somewhat elevated from the elbows.<sup>26</sup> Even when *nw*-pots are used instead of a single jar, the forearms are still raised from the elbows, as witness the faience sphinx of Amenophis III in New York,<sup>27</sup> holding lidded pots; and this is the pose that prevails thereafter for sphinxes making offerings (cf. the bronze sphinx of Apries, Louvre N 515). It will not escape the reader's attention that the arms of the Alford sphinx are not elevated but lie along the ground.

Caution, in fact, has to be exercised when defining 'archaizing' tendencies in Egyptian art. In the revival of an earlier style, it will be found that an antiquarian copying, like a kind of forgery, is not in question; rather an eclectic re-interpretation has been the aim. The Kushite and Saite revivals of the Old-Kingdom style, and they are rarer than the

<sup>23</sup> Louvre E 10299, Vandier, *op. cit.* pl. VIII, 6.

<sup>24</sup> E.g. Cairo CG 42013, 53507; MMA 35.9.3, 30.3.1; Turin 1375; Louvre 25276; BM 64564.

<sup>25</sup> W. S. Smith, *CAH* I<sup>2</sup> ch. XIV, 50–1. I have ignored the possibility that the king in question could be the wholly ephemeral Merenrē II, see *ibid.* 54.

<sup>26</sup> Cairo CG 42033 (Amenophis I, see n. 41 below).

<sup>27</sup> MMA 72.125.

inspiration of Middle-Kingdom and New-Kingdom archetypes, do not escape the technical conventions, nor the artistic vision of the periods in which they are copied. Only limited acquaintance with the qualities of the original and the copy would confuse the two, particularly when a great chasm of time separates them. A Saite artist had his own conception of the art of his past, and usually it takes the form of a mannerist selection of details, such as poses and fashions of dress, recalling former glories, but arranged according to the prevailing idioms of his own day, and rendered with a hard, precisely controlled technique.<sup>28</sup> It is doubtful whether the robust modelling of the Alford sphinx would have been to his somewhat precious taste, nor yet that the vulnerable pattern of beard, supposing that examples survived intact, would have encouraged copying in a period when royal sculpture, not excepting statues of sphinxes, was almost universally beardless.

If the stylistic features of the Alford sphinx all point inevitably to the VIth Dynasty, and to no other period, there seems no reason to doubt the supporting evidence of the inscription on the upper surface of the plinth and on its underside. The unknown sale-room critic who saw the glyphs as suggesting a New-Kingdom date was presumably influenced by the determinative of *ntr*, which is the seated god, and not the falcon on a standard, so characteristic of the Pyramid Texts with their archaic overtones. But already in the Vth Dynasty, if not earlier, the seated god appears in some texts, especially those referring to a great god, e.g. Osiris, Horus.<sup>29</sup> A near-contemporary reference providing a close parallel, is the clay tablet from El-Khanka, 7½ miles north of ancient Heliopolis.<sup>30</sup> There is nothing in the inscription on the sphinx that specifically dates the text to the New Kingdom in preference to the Old Kingdom.

## II

Edwards has touched upon the role of the sphinx as representing the sun-god as well as a 'sentinel'.<sup>31</sup> The sphinx as a protector is a familiar image, from the pair that guard the steps to the throne,<sup>32</sup> to the avenues of such creatures which banished evil from the precincts of Karnak and other holy places. The sphinx as guardian is nowhere so explicitly defined as in the example, dating from the Late Period, in Vienna with its admonitory text inscribed on the plinth declaring that it protects the tomb of the dignitary Wahibrē, expels the intruder and destroys evil invaders in their lairs.<sup>33</sup> In this the sphinx seems to have taken on the duties of the 'magic-bricks' of earlier times.<sup>34</sup> By the Late Period the sphinx has thus become the guardian even of the private tomb, a tradition that persists into late pagan times with the inclusion in the grave-goods of a couchant lion or sphinx, often wrongly catalogued as a 'toy'.<sup>35</sup>

From early times this function of the sphinx was actively aggressive and not purely minatory. As the sphinx or griffin, the king appears by the Vth Dynasty at the latest, in a

<sup>28</sup> Cf. J. D. Cooney *JNES* 9 (1950), 196–7.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. N. de G. Davies, *The Mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhetetep*, II (London, 1901), pls. XXVIII, XXIX.

<sup>30</sup> H. Brugsch, *Thesaurus inscriptionum aegyptiacarum*, VI (Leipzig, 1891), 1212; H. Gauthier, *Le Livre des Rois*, I (Cairo, 1907), 155, XXII. I am indebted to T. G. H. James for these references.

<sup>31</sup> I. E. S. Edwards, *The Pyramids of Egypt* (Harmondsworth, 1985), 121.

<sup>32</sup> *Sinuhe* B 249; T. Säve-Söderbergh, *Four Eighteenth Dynasty Tombs* (Oxford, 1957), pl. XXXVI.

<sup>33</sup> E. Komorzynski, *AfO* 17 (1954–5), 137–40. I date the sphinx in question (Vienna 76) to the fourth century BC.

<sup>34</sup> *BD* Chapter CLI.

<sup>35</sup> Particularly in the burials of children. Cf. J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1912–14)*, *Archaic Mastabas* (Cairo, 1923), pl. IV, 4; W. M. F. Petrie, *Roman Portraits and Memphitis (IV)* (London, 1911), 20, pl. xiv.

heraldic pose treading down the nations.<sup>36</sup> On the parade axe of Amosis he grasps by human hand and arm the severed head of the rebel foe.<sup>37</sup>

A century and a half of excavation at Giza have familiarized us with another aspect of the sphinx as the representation of the sun-god Harmachis; but so far this development cannot be traced before the XVIIIth Dynasty, and seems confined to the locality of the Great Sphinx at Giza.<sup>38</sup> The resurgence of the cult of the sun-god, perhaps under foreign inspiration in the New Kingdom, was probably the motivating force, although an unfinished temple of Khephren at the Great Sphinx may reveal that the idea was abroad as early as the IVth Dynasty.<sup>39</sup> The Alford sphinx, however, discloses another role that the creature may play, that of a suppliant. With human hands substituted for the grasping and tearing claws, it makes a peaceful donation to a god. The offering is almost invariably a libation,<sup>40</sup> rarely from a pair of *nw*-pots, as in our example and in the faience sphinx of Amenophis III, but more commonly from a single large jar as in the earliest congener so far traced.<sup>41</sup> It is evident that in such compositions, the god propitiated is an aspect of the sun-god Rē<sup>c</sup>-Ḥerakhte, Atum, Amen, or Aten,<sup>42</sup> and the suppliant represents the king himself. This is clearly the role of the Alford sphinx, just as in the almost contemporary statuette of Phiops I in Brooklyn, already cited: the king kneels to the god in order to make a libation in *nw*-pots. It may perhaps come as a surprise to realize that this benign aspect of the sphinx as the image of the king<sup>43</sup> should appear so early both in the iconography of the king and that of the sphinx.

The exact provenance of the Alford sphinx has not been disclosed, if it was ever known to its owner Mr Larking. Presumably the piece came to light somewhere near Alexandria, a location where a number of objects originally from Heliopolis have been turned up, perhaps removed thither in Roman times.<sup>44</sup> That it came originally from Heliopolis is suggested by the name of the god to whom it is dedicated, Rē<sup>c</sup>-Ḥerakhte the chief denizen of the temple there known as the Great Mansion.<sup>45</sup>

Lastly, it may not do too much harm to hazard a guess about the purpose of this diminutive sculpture. That it was a votive piece seems probable enough; but it is hardly likely that such an offering on so small a scale would have been transported to Alexandria for itself alone, and it seems reasonable to identify it as part of a greater entity. Two possibilities occur to the writer. The first is that it was an article of altar furniture. Votive statuettes of the king making an offering were displayed on altars, although the first examples that the writer has been able to trace are of the Amarna period.<sup>46</sup> A statuette of the king kneeling to make an offering of a large conical loaf appears not infrequently on the altar at which the Royal Family worship depicted in the Amarna tombs; but while a sphinx presenting *nw*-pots has not so far been traced,

<sup>36</sup> Berlin, Staatliche Museen 21832.

<sup>37</sup> E. Vernier, *Bijoux et orfèvreries* (Cairo, 1927), CG 52645.

<sup>38</sup> C. M. Zivie, *Giza au deuxième millénaire* (Cairo, 1976), 305.

<sup>39</sup> PM III<sup>2</sup>, I, 38–9.

<sup>40</sup> An exception is the bronze statuette of Apries in the Louvre (N 515) which holds its hands apart as though carrying a *hetep*-table.

<sup>41</sup> J. Romano, *JARCE* 13 (1976), 108, n. 24.

<sup>42</sup> E.g. K. Myśliwiec, *Studien zum Gott Atum*, I (HÄB 5, 1978), 15, figs. 1, 2; Cairo CG 42146; C. Aldred, *Akhenaten and Nefertiti* (New York, 1973), 99 no. 13.

<sup>43</sup> The long accepted identification of *šsp* or *šsp* *ʿnh* as the Egyptian term for 'sphinx' is now seriously questioned, cf. C. M. Zivie, *L'Ä V*, 1139–40.

<sup>44</sup> G. Daressy, *ASAE* 5 (1905), 113–28; C. Aldred, *JEA* 41 (1955), 5.

<sup>45</sup> H. Gauthier, *Dictionnaire des noms géographiques*, IV (Cairo, 1927), 54.

<sup>46</sup> E.g. Davies, *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna*, IV (London, 1906), pls. XV, XVI, XXIII, XXXI.

a sphinx with a single large libation jar is represented on the Karnak *talatat*.<sup>47</sup>

The second suggestion is that it was part of a votive model of the temple of Rē-Ḥerakhte similar to the Gorringe example dedicated by Sethos I, and recently reconstructed in The Brooklyn Museum,<sup>48</sup> a pair of sphinxes slotting into the emplacements made for the purpose. One must admit however that in such a situation their function would be less protective than propitiatory, unless like the Brooklyn model they were accompanied by a pair of sphinxes of orthodox pattern acting as sentinels.

<sup>47</sup> R. W. Smith and D. B. Redford, *The Akhenaten Temple Project*, I (Warminster, 1976), 26, fig. 7 no. 26; evidently a female sphinx (Tephenis?).

<sup>48</sup> A. Badawy, *Miscellanea Wilbouriana* I (1972), 1–25. Cf. Pushkin Museum, Moscow no. 2746, see note 10 above.

ALDRED



a



b



c

The Alford sphinx (RMS 1984.405)