

Free research paper about enigma in stone: the sphinx of giza

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



The origins of the Sphinx was derived from Egyptian, Persian and Greek Mythologies. A sphinx is a mythical beast with a body of a lion and a human head. In Greek mythology, it is portrayed as a winged beast who preys upon humans who cannot answer its riddles (Pinch, 206). Early Persians also believed that the Sphinx was a guardian deity whose mission was to protect the royal Persian Gods (British Museum, n. p.). Meanwhile, the Egyptians also built a sphinx of their own. The Great Sphinx located in Giza, Egypt had been buried in the sands for hundreds of years not until the early 19th century wherein mass excavations began to rescue the age-old monument. The Egyptian Sphinx does not have a pair of wings, unlike the sphinxes of Persians and Greeks; its crouching body was poised to attack while its tail was carefully placed behind. For hundreds of years, the enigma of this magnificent monument had made the scholars, archaeologists and even ordinary people stare in unworldly fascination, particularly the mystery the face depicted on the ancient statue. German archaeologist Gunter Dreyer had teamed up with Egyptian archaeologists to uncover the secrets behind the Sphinx. Dating from circa 2, 500 B. C., the Giza plateau was a desolate landscape; consisting of a dry land with gusty, sandy winds and a very hot climate. The place was called the “ City of the Dead.” The Sphinx measures about 240 feet long, equivalent to the size of a football field. Its massive body can swallow up to 50 jumbo jets and with a height of 70 feet, it is considered to be as tall as the White House (Glassman, “ Riddles of the Sphinx”). To further understand the mystery of the Sphinx, my paper will also include a brief history of the ceremonial rituals of the ancient city of Abydos and a few of well-known Egyptian deities. The pyramids are built by

the people as a tomb and additionally as a temple for religious rites. They are designed and specially constructed for the pharaoh in order to ensure their safe journey to the afterlife. Ancient Egyptian engineers aligned Kafre's pyramid, The Great Sphinx and the Sphinx's temple to form a straight line, following the path of the sun above the horizon. The rising sun signifies rebirth whilst the sunset means death. Hence, the sphinx is the guardian to the door leading to the afterlife. Treasures and even servants were also buried along with the pharaohs; this was indeed true due to the evidences of human sacrifices found in the city of Abydos, Egypt. King Aha, the pharaoh of the First Dynasty held absolute power. He ordered his favorite servants and some lions to be slaughtered because in the Egyptian culture, lions symbolize the power of the pharaoh (Glassman, " Riddles of the Sphinx"). Most of their deities are represented with animal heads and human bodies; however, the sphinx was the opposite. In fact, the sphinx human head represents the king or queen placed on top of a lion's body indicating that the ruler has the capability of defending Egypt against invaders (Pinch, 206). Dreyer suggests that the Great Sphinx was carved from a limestone mountain of the Giza plateau. According to him, the Giza plateau was originally a seabed and evidences of marine life are found on the sides of the sphinx's body and the surrounding ditch. For thousands of years, the water of the Giza plateau evaporated and the animals living in the sea died and their remains are fossilized. Throughout the years, their remains became compressed together in a process called sedimentation. The ancient Egyptians carved the enormous lump of rock to resemble the Khafre's face, although until now it is still highly debated whose face is being represented

by the Sphinx (Regier, 32). The workers used primitive tools to carve the hard limestone into the shape of the sphinx today. The workers were actually farmers who worked for the pharaohs in order to pay their taxes. Building pyramids is a common thing for the pharaohs to ensure their safety even in death. The tedious task of building pyramids was demonstrated by Dreyer and Lehman and their team of Egyptologists. They attempted to carve a nose from a chunk of limestone rock using primitive tools but with a little progress; hence they resorted to modern tools. Copper was an important metal for sculpting. They are malleable when heated, and this property of copper was highly beneficial to the Egyptians because they can reshape again the metal when it becomes blunt after the sculpting process (Glassman, " Riddles of the Sphinx"). Meanwhile, workers hauled off tons of limestone rocks away from the site and they used this to build the Sphinx's shrine situated quite near the Sphinx's monument. The seabed limestone became the sphinx and temple. Scholars believed that the Sphinx was built in the honor of the God Tutu believed that the Great Sphinx was the visual representation of the sphinx-god named Tutu. He was portrayed as a standing sphinx with wings and tail resembling a snake. He was the son of the Egyptian goddess Neith and one of his assigned tasks is to keep enemies at a safe distance (Pinch, 206). Perhaps this is the reason why the Egyptians built the Sphinx of Giza, probably to drive away the enemies attempting to plunder the pharaohs hidden treasures. Nevertheless, the ancient Greeks and Romans view the Great Sphinx as an avant-garde that holds enigmatical wisdom (Regier, 24). Even today, archaeologists and common people admire the genius of the ancient Egyptians. Dreyer and his team still continues to

preserve the remaining sphinx, which is threatened to become dust due to the water coming out from the old seabed. The rocks of sphinx absorb them, making it crack and with the continuing soil erosion the sphinx we know today will only remain in history books as its age-old body is slowly crumbling into dust.

Works Cited

British Museum. org. 'British Museum: Stone Relief Showing a Sphinx'. Web. 8 Dec. 2014.

Pinch, Geraldine. Handbook of Egyptian Mythology. California: ABC-CLIO, 2002. Print.

Regier, Willis Goth. Book of the Sphinx. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. Print.

" Riddles of the Sphinx." NOVA. Writ. Gary Glassman. Dir. Gary Glassman. PBS, 2010. DVD.