The Sphinxes of King Ramesses II

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Abstract

Representations of the pharaohs in Egyptian statuary, known from the early dynasties to the Roman period had many functions: propagandistic, religious, didactic, commemorative, magical and decorative. Anthropomorphic representations of the ruler are most common, although his affinity to certain animals, particularly those that are zoomorphic incarnations of the most important gods, is frequently emphasized in various ways. The most popular type of statue showing the king as a syncretic, half-human and half – animal is the sphinx, combining the body of a reclining lion with the head of a pharaoh.¹

This research aims at studying the artistic features of the sphinxes of king Ramesses II.

Introduction

The Sphinx in Ancient Egypt

The oldest known statue of this type is a preserved sphinx of Djedefre (now in the Louvre), and its most monumental version is the Great sphinx in Giza, made from living rock. A particular type of royal sphinx, was the king's human head with a lion's mane first recorded in the statuary of the Middle Kingdom (a statue of Amenemhat III in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo), it is also found in representation of Hateshepsut (in the Metropolitan Museum) and Taharqa (in the British Museum). Among the different types of sphinx with royal head, there are also figures with two human arms replacing the animal's forefeet and holding a cult object. This pattern was first found in the statue of Amenhotep III found in the temple of Monthu at Karnak. Another peculiar version of a sphinx figure, dating back to the same reign, now located in Cairo, shows the animal with two wings.²
The Sphinxes of King Ramesses II

a- Tanis School

This school is considered the most energetic and popular during the sole reign of king Ramesses II. The style of this school could be found in the monuments of Upper Egypt, especially in Nubia. The distinguished line of this school is the shape of the eyes. It was concerned with showing the organic shape of the eyes, neglecting the artificial lines such as the sloping shape of the eyebrow and the ornamental line of the eyes. The pupil of the eye is represented as a lens with circular edges and, sometimes, as a swelling of the surface with erased contours. The eye is topped by a hollow in the lid where the upper edge protrudes from the sloping of the eyebrow. The depression of the lower lid shows the protruding of the circular cheeks. There is another depression separating the face from the surface of the neck. Two horizontal wrinkles always appear on the neck. The full mouth has upturned corners and the lips are short. In Tanis, the contour of the nose is straight extending with the contour of the forehead. In general, the nose of Ramesses II in Tanis school is straight rather than crooked.

The effect of Tanis school could be noticed in the temples of Gerf Hussein, Derr and Wadi es-Sebau, especially in the simple shape of the eyes which lack the artificial lines.³

1- Sphinx Usurped by Ramesses II (pl. 1. a-n)

Material: red granite Length: 310 cm
Provenance: El Sharkkia, San El-Hagar (Tanis), now in Cairo Museum Date: Middle kingdom, 13¹ dynasty

This sphinx dates back to the 13¹ Dynasty; it has the facial features of king Amenemhat II. As many other monuments of Tanis, this sphinx was later usurped by Ramesses II. The king wears a pleated nemes headdress with a sacred uraeus on his forehead. There are remains of a ceremonial beard attached to his chin. The sphinx has a long tail coiled on his right leg. ⁴ The inscription on the base, left half.
((Long) live: Horus-Falcon, Strong Bull, beloved of Maat, Lord of jubilees) like his father Ptah-Tatenen; King of South and North of Egypt, Lord of Both Lands, Usrmare Setepenre, Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II, given life, the beloved of Seth of Ramesses II, given life, stability and dominion on Re's throne forever.

Base, right half

((Long) live: Horus-Falcon, Strong Bull, beloved of Maat; a Re) whom the Gods loved, furnishing [the Two Lands]; [King of South and North of Egypt, Lord of Both Lands, Usrmare] Setepenre, Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II, given life, the beloved of [goddess] of Ramesses II, given life, stability and dominion; may he guide all the living.

On chest

Lord of both Lands, Usrmare Setepenre

Between paws

[Son of Re], Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II, given life.
2- Sphinx of Amenemhat III Usurped by Ramesses II (pl. 2. a,b)

Material: grey granite                           Height: 150 cm
Length: 236 cm                                    Width: 75 cm
Provenance: El Sharkkia, San El-Hagar (Tanis), now in Cairo Museum
Date: Middle kingdom, 12th dynasty, reign of Amenemhat III (1844-1797 B.C.).

This sphinx is one of a series found at Tanis in the eastern Nile Delta. It was discovered by Mariette in 1863, and was perhaps originally located in the temple of the Cat Goddess at Bubastis. The countenance of this sphinx is a portrait of Amenemhat III. The grandeur of the features is amplified by the lion's mane which, here exceptionally, replaces the royal nemes. It makes an unnatural frame for the face, which intensifies the harsh, almost brutal expression. In contrast to the deep-set, hooded eyes of Amenemhat III's father "Senusert III", his eyes are large and slightly exophthalmic, with shallower, flesher sockets. A broader span separates his knobby cheekbones, and his mouth is fuller. The lips look as if they are held closed only by a slight but awkward thrust of the fleshy little chin, as if the upper and lower jaws were out of alignment. This sphinx was first usurped by one of the Hyksos kings and it still holds evidence of the successive usurpations: that of the king Nehesy, of Ramesses II, Merenptah and Psusennes.

b- Memphis School

It is more traditional than the school of Tanis. It kept some of the characteristics of the reign of Sety I especially the shape of the eyes. The contour of the eyes is either circular like Tanis school or elongated with a horizontal ornamental line. A parallel line shows the sloping of the eyebrow, which, crossing the forehead horizontally, falls to the corners of the eyes. The upper lid is flat and concave. The contour of the mouth presents geometrical forms borrowed from the forms used during the Sety I’s reign. The edge of the upper lid is either straight and falls to the corners of the mouth or it is horizontal in its frontal part and folded near the corners of the lips. The mouth, in this school, is circular and is not pointed like in Tanis school; even the lower lip is not always circular and small but treated as a huge unit similar to the upper lip. The head rests on a slender neck and slopes forward. Sometimes the head seems to be elongated especially if it is topped by a high crown.
Sometimes the contour of the nose and the forehead presents a straight line like in the school of Tanis. But sometimes the division between the nose and the forehead appears from the crooked shape of the nose.9

3- An Usurped Sphinx of Ramesses II (pl. 3)

Material: alabaster                   Length: not less than 26 feet
Weight: 8 tons                        Provenance: Memphis
Date: New Kingdom, 18th dynasty, reign of Amenhotep II

This sphinx represents the king wearing the royal nemes headdress with the royal uraeus at the front. A curved beard is attached to his chin. Although this sphinx is known to have belonged to Ramesses II, it is obvious that it bears the facial features of Amenhotep II of the 18th Dynasty. It may have been usurped later by Ramesses II similarly to many other statues.10

4- A Headless Sphinx of Ramesses II (pl. 4)

Material: reddish brown sandstone     Height: 154 cm
Provenance: Memphis
Date: New Kingdom, 19th dynasty, reign of Ramesses II

This is a sphinx representing Ramesses II holding a vase. The king stares forward putting his two hands on the sides of the vase. The lid of the vase is in the shape of an animal’s head. The sphinx has a long tail, coiled on the rear right thigh. The king wears the pleated royal nemes headdress with a braid at its back. He also wears bracelets. Unfortunately, the head of the sphinx and the lid of the vase are lost.11

The inscriptions on the right arm
On the left arm

(R\textsuperscript{c} msw mry imn)
Ramesses II beloved of Amun.

On the vase

(wsr-m\textsuperscript{3}t-R\textsuperscript{c}-stp-n-R\textsuperscript{c}) nb h\textsuperscript{c}w (R\textsuperscript{c} msw mry imn)
Usrmare Setepenre, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II.

On the base, at front

\textsuperscript{c}nh hr [k3 nht mry-m\textsuperscript{3}t]\(\) (Long) live: Horus-Falcon, Strong Bull, beloved of Maat;

On the right

mry nbty mk kmt w\textsuperscript{c}.f h\textsuperscript{3}swt hr-nbw wsr-rnpwt \textsuperscript{c}3 nhtw n nht ns\textsuperscript{w}t-bity (wsr-m\textsuperscript{3}t-R\textsuperscript{c}-stp-n-R\textsuperscript{c}) s\textsuperscript{3} r\textsuperscript{c} (R\textsuperscript{c} msw mry imn) mry p\textsuperscript{th}
Nebty-Ruler, Protector of Egypt, curbing the foreign countries; Golden Horus, Rich in years, great in victories; King of South and North of Egypt, Usrmare Setpenre, Son of Re, Ramesses II, [beloved of] Ptah.\textsuperscript{12}
It started with the imitation of the artistic style characteristic of the reign of Sety I reaching the popular style of Tanis school. The distinguished line of Karnak school is the existence of lines showing the bent of the eyebrow and the ornamental line near the eyes. At some times these lines are heavy and intensive, at others they become thinner. The bending of the eyebrow is folded in its inner part and its edge is rarely parallel to the ornamental line of the eyes. Rarely the contour of the eye was erased and the bending of the eyebrow appears as an edge from a hollow representing the upper eyelid. So, the artists of Karnak reduced the severity of the lines of their predecessors by making circularness to the contour. This tendency could be noticed in Karnak in addition to Luxor, Ramesseum and Abydos.

Sometimes, the hewing between the forehead and the nose protrudes from the crooked nose. This crooked nose of Ramesses II represents a circular contour without any hewing between the nose and the forehead and the most popular part was the straight nose of Ramesses II. The hewing between the nose and the forehead could barely be noticed because the sunken forehead protrudes from the straightness of the line of the nose with a slight waving in the contour. A similar tendency could be noticed in the shape of the mouth. The upper lid which sometimes has a straight contour is horizontal or turned near the corners of the mouth. And the most popular parts were the circular lips which become thinner toward the pointed corners. The face is often small with a noticeable height of the contour of the jaw to the ears. The chin is elongated. This style could be found in the temples of Ramesses II at Nubia. It became more primitive in the Nubian temples especially in Wadi es-Sebau and Gerf Hussein, and this was the effect of the artistic schools in the Delta except for Memphis school.\textsuperscript{13}

5- A Sphinx of Ramesses II (pl.5)

Material: crystalline sandstone
Length: 37 cm
Width: 9 cm
Provenance: Thebes, Karnak Temple, now in Cairo Museum
Date: New Kingdom, 19\textsuperscript{th} dynasty, reign of Ramesses II (1304-1237 B.C)

This small statue of Ramesses II was found on 11\textsuperscript{th} May, 1905. It came from Karnak cachette, where it was taken from the temple of Karnak and reburied in the court of the seventh pylon.\textsuperscript{14} It depicts Ramesses II as a
sphinx, which was in all periods the symbol of the sun which appears on the horizon and that was for the dead king who was to be awaken to an eternal life. The style of depicting the king as a crouching sphinx is a traditional pose known from the Old Kingdom as the Egyptian artisans combined the head of the monarch with the body of a lion symbolizing kingship in ancient Egypt to create a vigorous image of the king, gathering the strength of the lion with the intelligence of the human. Usually, the only human part of the sphinx is the head and this type of human-headed sphinx representation began in the New Kingdom.

Ramesses II is holding the vessel of Amun with the head of a ram which was sacred to god Amun. This vessel is made of gold, silver or copper and was offered by the pharaoh to Amun during the New Year’s festival as the Egyptian New Year began in midsummer with the rising of the dog star "Sirius" and this coincided with the beginning of the inundation at Aswan. An actual vessel of this shape made of precious metal, containing the first flood waters and also holding sacred unguents was presented to the gods in return for a long life.

Ramesses II here wears a nemes-headdress with a uraeus, a ceremonial false beard and a broad collar which makes the transition between anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms acceptable. His hands clasp a high-shouldered vase surmounted with a ram’s head. At the front of the vessel, the birth name and coronation name of Ramesses II were incised in cartouches, Lord of Both Lands, Usrmare Setepenre, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II. The statue was originally painted and the vessel had a stucco covering. It may have been gilded as well.

6- Sphinxes of Ramesses II in the Temple of Wadi El-Sebau (pl.6, pl.7, a,b)

The Arabic name for the locality where this temple stood, Wadi el-Sebua, "Valley of the Lions", is derived from the avenue of sphinxes that led to the temple. On each side of the gateway of this temple, there is a colossal standing statue and a sphinx of Ramesses II. They are placed on high stone pedestals carved with bound prisoners; Africans on the south and Asiatics and Lybians on the north. 18
The inscriptions on both sides of the pedestal of the south sphinx

(cnh hr [k3 nht mry-m3*t] nswt-bity nb t3wy (wsr-m3c t-Rc-stp-n-Rc) s3 r€ nb h€w (Rc msw mry imn) m pr imn di (Long) live: Horus-Falcon, Strong Bull, beloved of Maat; king of South and North of Egypt, Lord of Both Lands, Usrmare Setepenre, Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II, in the House of Amun, and given life like Re forever; all lands, all foreign countries are overthrown beneath your sandals forever.

North Sphinx
Base, front (south), east side

(cnh ntr nfr nw m nswt s3 r€ (Rc msw mry imn) m pr imn
Horus-Falcon, Strong Bull, beloved of Maat; king of South and North of Egypt, Lord of Both Lands, Usrmare Setepenre, Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II [……rest lost…….].

South Minor Sphinx
Base, front, east side

(cnh ntr nf r c n m nswt s3 r€ (Rc msw mry imn) m pr imn
(Long) live the Good god, handsome as King, Son of Re, Ramesses II in the House of Amun.

North Minor Sphinx
Base, front, east side

(cnh ntr nf r wr mrt m…s3 r€ (Rc msw mry imn) m pr imn
(Long) live the Good god, rich in love, in/as […….., Son of Re, Ramesses II in the House of Amun.
The gateway leads to the first court, which has an avenue of six human-headed sphinxes representing Ramesses II wearing the nemes headdress which is topped by the double crown. The face of the king bears a self-satisfied expression. The provincial carving may be rather crude, but the effect is powerful. On the front part of each base, there is an Iunmutef priest before the cartouches of the king and on the sides are bound prisoners. 

The inscriptions on the first eastern most Sphinx, south row

**East Half**

\[ \text{cnh hr } [k3 nht mry-m3t] \text{ nb hbw mi it.f pth t3-tnn nswt-bity nb t3wy (wsr-m3t-R\textsuperscript{c}-stp-n-R\textsuperscript{c}) s3 r\textsuperscript{c} nb h\textsuperscript{c}w (R\textsuperscript{c} msw mry imn) ir.n.f m mnw n it.f imn r\textsuperscript{c} nsw ntrw ir.n.f c3 sspw di cnh mi r\textsuperscript{c} } \]

(Long) live: Horus-Falcon, Strong Bull, beloved of Maat, Lord of jubilees like his father Ptah-Tatenen; king of South and North of Egypt, Lord of Both Lands, Usrmare Setepenre, Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II. He has made as his monument for his father Amen-Re, King of the Gods, the making for him of a great sphinx; and (is) given life like Re.

**West Half**

\[ \text{cnh hr } [k3 nht mry-m3t] \text{ nb hbw mi it.f pth t3-tnn nswt-bity nb t3wy (wsr-m3t-R\textsuperscript{c}-stp-n-R\textsuperscript{c}) s3 r\textsuperscript{c} nb h\textsuperscript{c}w (R\textsuperscript{c} msw mry imn) m pr imn di cnh mi r\textsuperscript{c} dt } \]

(Long) live: Horus-Falcon, Strong Bull, beloved of Maat, Lord of jubilees like his father Ptah-Tatenen; king of South and North of Egypt, Lord of Both Lands, Usrmare Setepenre, Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II in the House of Amun, and given life forever.
Third western most Sphinx, north row

East Half

(Long) live: Horus-Falcon, Strong Bull, beloved of Maat, Lord of jubilees like his father Ptah-Tatenen; king of South and North of Egypt, Lord of Both Lands, Usrmare Setepenre, Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II. He has made as his monument for his father Amen-Re, King of the Gods, the making for him of a great sphinx; and (is) given life like Re.

West Half

(Long) live: Horus-Falcon, Strong Bull, beloved of Re; Nebty-Ruler, Protector of Egypt, curbing the foreign countries, a Re whom the Gods fashioned, furnishing the Two Lands; Golden Horus, Rich in years, great in victories; king of South and North of Egypt, Lord of Both Lands, Usrmare Setepenre, Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II, in the House of Amun, and given life, stability and dominion forever.

In the second court, beyond the gateway, the sphinx avenue continues, but here the four sphinxes are falcon-headed and represent four forms of Horus, Maha and Miam on the left and of Baki and Edfū on the right. Between the front paws of each sphinx, there is a statuette of Ramesses II.
The inscriptions on the first eastern Sphinx, south row

East side

nswt-bity nb t3wy (wsr-m3t-Rc-stp-n-Rc) s3 r¢ nb h¢w (R¢ msw mry imn) mry hr nb mh3 di ¢nh

King of South and North of Egypt, Usrmare Setepenre, Son of Re, Ramesses II, the beloved of Horus, Lord of Meha, and given life.

Front, East Half

Hr [k3 nht mry-m3¢t] nswn-bity (wsr-m3t-Rc-stp-n-Rc) s3 r¢ (R¢ msw mry imn) mry hr nb mh3

Horus-Falcon, Strong Bull, beloved of Maat; King of South and North of Egypt, Usrmare Setepenre (Son of Re, Ramesses II), the beloved of Horus, Lord of Meha (adds: who gives life).

Second western Sphinx, south row

East side

nswt-bity nb t3wy (wsr-m3¢t-Rc-stp-n-Rc) s3 r¢ nb h¢w (R¢ msw mry imn) mry hr nb my3m mi r¢

King of South and North of Egypt, Lord of Both Lands, who makes monu[ments] (Var: Lord who performs the rituals), Usrmare Setepenre, Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II, [the beloved of] Horus, Lord of Miam, like Re.

First eastern Sphinx, north row

East side

nswt-bity nb t3wy (wsr-m3¢t-Rc-stp-n-Rc) s3 r¢ nb h¢w (R¢ msw mry imn) m pr imn mry hr bhdyt

King of South and North of Egypt, Lord of Both Lands, Usrmare Setepenre, Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II [in] the House of Amun, the beloved of Horus of Behdet.25
Second western Sphinx, north row
East side

\[\text{nswt-bity \ nb \ t3wy (wsr-m3^c\ t-R^c\ -stp-n-R^c) \ s3 \ r^c \ nb \ h^c \ w\ (R^c\ msw \ mry \ imn) \ m\ pr\ imn \ mry \ hr}\]

king of South and North of Egypt, Lord of Both Lands, Usrmare Setepenre, Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, Ramesses II [in] the House of Amun, the beloved of Horus. 26
conclusion

This study has some results which can be represented as follows: for the majority of the statues of Ramesses II, the king wears the nemes-headdress combined with the double crown. The eyes are almost almond-shaped, with softer inner canthi which dip slightly downwards; the upper eyelids are lowered as if the king looks downward (and not only on statues of colossal scale), a practice in use since Amenhotep III and the Amarna period. The Tanis colossi, however, look straight ahead, beyond the observer, a convention used in the Old Kingdom and again in the 11th and 12th Dynasties.27

The mouth on the Ramesses colossi is usually curved, the corners often drawn upwards in a faint smile. Even on portraits of Ramesses II with accentuated lower lids, drilled mouth corners, and a chin marked by side furrows, the general expression is serene and lacks the sternness of the Memphis colossi (except on usurped statues). The ears of the Ramesses statues are comparatively small and almost always have pierced lobes.
References

2- Mysliwiec, K., Ibid. p. 229.
7- Russman, E., R., *Egyptian Sculpture "Cairo and Luxor"*, Texas, 1989, pp. 64, 65, fig. 28.
18- Gohary, J., Ibid.
21- Kitchen, K., A., Ibid. pp.726, 479; Gauthier, M., H., Ibid. pp. 4-6, pls. 2a, 2b, 3b.
26- Kitchen, K., A., Ibid; Gauthier, M., H., Ibid.
تماثيل "أبو الهول" للملك رمسيس الثاني

نهى محمد حافظ فتحي

كان لتصوير الفراعنة في التماثيل المصرية القديمة منذ عصر الأسرات المبكر وحتى العصر الروماني عدة أغراض: دعائية، دينية، تعليمية، سحرية، زخرفية، أو تخليداً لذكرى الملك. وقد كان هناك نوع من التماثيل التي تجسد العلاقة بين الملك والحيوان، و من أشهر أنواع هذه التماثيل التي تصور الملك بنصف إنسان و نصف حيوان هو تمثال "أبو الهول" التي تجمع بين جسد أسد رابض و رأس الفرعون. و أقدم تمثال من هذا النوع يرجع إلى الملك جدف رع (الأسرة الرابعة) وأشهر هذه التماثيل هو تمثال "أبو الهول" للملك خفرع (الأسرة الرابعة) بالجيزة. و هناك نوع خاص من تماثيل "أبو الهول" الملكية والتي تصور وجها الملك محاطا بعرف الأسد (تمثال الملك امنمحات الثالث – الدولة الوسطى - المتحف المصري) وأيضا تمثال الملكة حتشبسوت الموجود بجناح الميتروبوليتان و تمثال طاهرق بال المتحف البريطاني. و من ضمن الأنواع المختلفة لتمثال أبي الهول و التي تحمل رأس الملك. هناك نوع نجده في ذراعين آدميين يحلا محل الأقدام الأمامية للحيوان لتحمل قربانه. و يعتبر تمثال الملك أمنحوتب الثالث الموجود بمعبدي الآلهة مونتو بالكرنك هو أول نموذج لهذا النوع. كما أن هناك نوعاً مميزاً لتمثال "أبو الهول" حيث يصور الحيوان لجناح.

وهيدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة تماثيل "أبو الهول" الخاصة بالملك رمسيس الثاني سواء تماثيل الأصلية أو تماثيل المستعارة من الملوك السابقين.

و في النهاية الخاتمة التي تتحدث عن الملامح الفنية لتماثيل رمسيس الثاني والتي تمكنا من التمييز بين التماثيل الأصلية و المستعارة.
Pl. (1.a) Sphinx Usurped by Ramesses II
Photo by the author

Pl. (1.b, c)
The base of the sphinx
Photo by the author

Pl. (1.d, e)
The base of the sphinx
Photo by the author
Pl. (1.f, g)
The back side of the base of the sphinx
Photo by the author

Pl. (1.h, i)
The base of the sphinx
Photo by the author

Pl. (1.j, k)
The base of the sphinx
Photo by the author
Pl. (1.l, m)
The base of the sphinx
Photo by the author

Pl. (1.n)
The base of the sphinx
Photo by the author

Pl. (2.a,b)
Sphinx of Amenemhat III usurped by Ramesses II
Russmann, E., R., Egyptian Sculpture "Cairo and Luxor", Texas, 1989, p.65, fig.28.
Pl. (3)
An usurped Sphinx of Ramesses II

Pl. (4)
A Headless Sphinx of Ramesses

Pl. (5)
A Sphinx of Ramesses II
Pl. (6)
Sphinxes of Ramesses II in the Temple of Wadi El-Sebau

Pl. (7.a)
Sphinxes of Ramesses II in the Temple of Wadi El-Sebau (the outer court)

Pl. (7.b)
One of the sphinxes of Ramesses II at the outer court (temple of Wadi El-Sebau)