

# A New Interpretation of a Rare Old Kingdom Dual Title: The King's Chief Librarian and Guardian of the Royal Archives of *Mehit*

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## Abstract

To date, no unequivocal textual reference to the Great Sphinx has been identified prior to Egypt's New Kingdom. Here, we present evidence that the monument we now know as the Great Sphinx was called *Mehit* and that this name was part of an exclusive title held only by the highest officials of the royal Egyptian court going back to at least early dynastic times, i.e. prior to the time of the Great Sphinx's generally presumed construction during the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Furthermore, the symbolic origins of this title precede the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty by at least five centuries, going back to the very cradle of writing during the earliest dynastic era of the early Nile civilization. Based on this philological evidence corroborating geological and archeo-astronomical evidence previously published, we conclude that a lion-like stone monument existed on the Giza Plateau long before the Great Sphinx is generally believed to have been made and that early dynastic Egyptians referred to it in writing.

## Keywords

Egypt, Great Sphinx, Hieroglyphs, Hall of Records, Ancient Library

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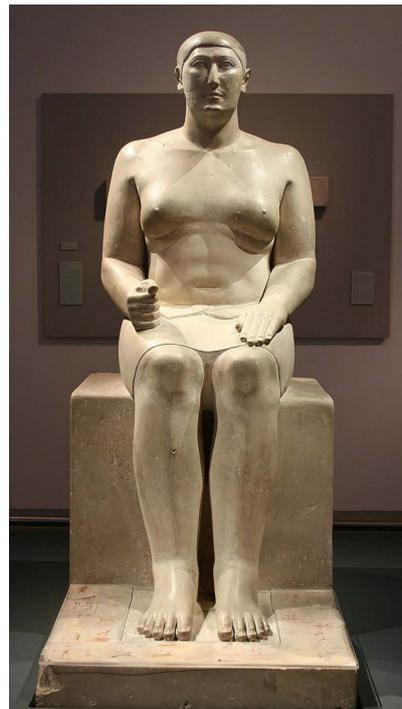
## 1. Introduction

Controversy lingers as to when the Great Sphinx was made. Astronomical and geological evidence suggests a significantly older age than that accepted by mainstream Egyptologists who base their theory on the overall plan and emerging solar theme at the time of 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty king *Khafre* while disputing the interpretation of the observed weathering patterns and the meaning of the seismic

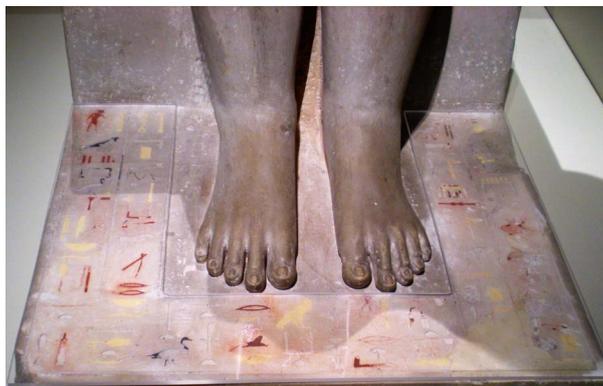
data. One of the more pointed criticisms of the idea of an older Great Sphinx is that no written evidence exists which proves a lion-like monument stood on the Giza Plateau before its currently accepted date of creation during the Old Kingdom, circa 2500 B.C.E. In this paper, we would like to address this contention by showing evidence to the contrary. We believe that proper dating of this monument is vital to the understanding of human history and the state of art and technology at this remote time. To the academic field of Egyptology, we hope to contribute a new context within which to more easily understand the state of technology extant when other very early monuments were built. Our investigation begins with a title conferred to high officials at the royal Egyptian court, which Egyptologists have not properly translated to date.

## 2. Results and Discussion

Shortly after beginning the first of several exploratory campaigns at Giza in 1912, Hermann Junker struck archaeological “gold” (Junker, 1929): Behind the northern-most false door of the corridor chapel of a large mastaba tomb situated in the 4000 cemetery to the west of G1 (Great Pyramid), he discovered the sitting statue of the likely brain behind the design of the Great Pyramid: *Khufu’s* vizier (*dhat*) *Hemiunu* (Figure 1). That this man was important at *Khufu’s* court became clear from the inscription on the relief carved into the statue’s pedestal and enhanced with colored paste (Figure 2). Among several titles as illustrious as



**Figure 1.** Statue of Hemiunu, 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum Hildesheim, Germany. <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e1/Statue-of-Hemiun.jpg>. By Einsamer Schütze (Own work) [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>), CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons.



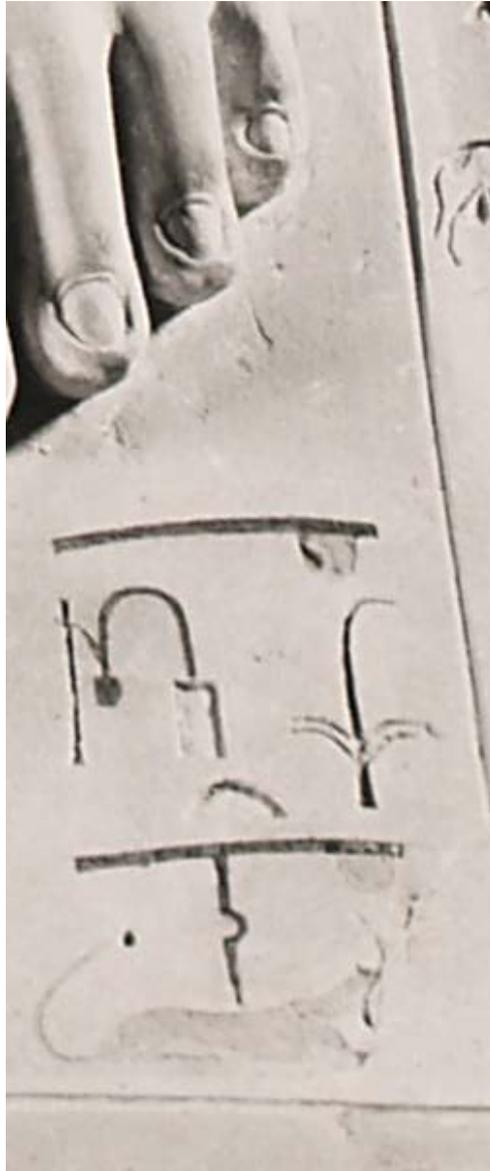
**Figure 2.** Pedestal showing inscription of Hemiunu's various titles. The seven symbols in question are below the three outer toes of the left foot. Photograph (modified/cropped) courtesy of Caroline Rocheleau, An Archaeologist's Diary; <http://www.archaeologistsdiary.wordpress.com/>

“Greatest of the Five of the House of Thoth” and “Cantor of the Singers of Upper and Lower Egypt”, is a tandem set of insignia in front of the three outer toes of *Hemiunu's* sculpture's left foot (**Figure 3**) that until now has eluded full translation.

Seven distinct, vertically aligned symbols can be identified. They are, from top to bottom (*Gardiner Sign List, 2017, designation in parentheses*): Axe (T7; see **Figure 4**)-Reed and Inkwell (Y4)-Sedge (M23)-Bread Loaf (X1)-Axe (T7)-Bent Rod? (Unknown)-Recumbent Lion (E23?). The fact that the axe symbol (Master/Overseer/Architect/Carpenter) is repeated in tandem suggests that two titles inscribed here were contextually merged into one. In other words, it makes no sense to interpret one without the other, because they belong together. This is attested by an identical inscription (**Figure 5**) found on a tomb stele dedicated to another official, likely *Hemiunu's* successor, by the name of *Wepemnefret* (*Smith, 1963*). The phonetic values of the first five of these hieroglyphs are *medjeh-sesh-nesu-t-medjeh*. The bent rod-like symbol has no known phonetic value and it was not described by either Gardiner or *Budge (1920)*. The extended library of the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (IFAO) lists this symbol as a variant of Gardiner P11, i.e. P11a, Catalog P-10-005 UCS 14996, (personal communication to M.S., Dr. Christian Bayer, Gerstenberg-Kurator, Roemer-und Pelizaeus-Museum Hildesheim GmbH; *Suignard, 2017*; see also examples of P11 in *Vygus, 2015*).

However, the P11 symbol represents a mooring post used to dock ships, which is quite distinct from the bent-rod symbol at hand. A more modern mooring *block*, though still not a rod, does have a half-circular eyelet for it to be tied to a rope and serve as an anchor, but we believe this IFAO entry may have been an attempt to somehow catalog this symbol visually and, without knowing the category of objects to which it actually belongs, it was incorrectly assigned to Gardiner's P-category (Ships and Parts of Ships). This entry will likely confuse philologists attempting to interpret it.

The recumbent lion symbol may: a) phonetically transliterate to the sound “r”,



**Figure 3.** Axe-Inkwell and Reed-Sedge-Bread Loaf-Axe-Unknown Rod-Lioness. Photograph (modified/cropped) courtesy of KHM-Museumsverband; <https://www.khm.at/en/>.



**Figure 4.** An example of the real life tool object, first from the left, which may have given rise to the axe symbol. Cairo Museum. Photograph by M.S., 2017.



**Figure 5.** Giza tomb 1201 Stele of Wepemnefret, 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. The same symbols as in **Figure 3** can be more distinctly seen in the right-most column at the top. Notice the unknown rod symbol extending vertically up from the back of the lioness symbol. The rest of the inscription below the tandem title contained within the same stylistic compartment of this stele suggests that Wepemnefret was also a Seshat priest at the royal library implying that the records kept secure were of an astronomical nature. Photograph courtesy of the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Regents of the University of California—catalog number 6-19825.

“ru”, or “l”, b) determinatively refer to this animal in a generic sense, or c) logographically refer to a specific lionide deity like *Tefnut*, *Sekhmet* (memphite), or *Mehit* (thinite), the latter two of which were worshiped as earthly manifestations of *Re*. This suggested to previous translators that *Hemiunu* was the overseer of the royal scribes and “Craftsman of *Mehit*” (Smith, 1963: p. 12; italics added), but there is no plausible association between these two titles which would necessitate their contiguous display on steles and statues. Helck and Otto (1982) non-committally translated this title as “Meister[s] des weiblichen Feliden-Numens” (i.e. “Master of the Female Feline Numen”) speculating that it was a precursor to what would later become an officially recognized (i.e. entitled) “Numen-Priest”, a state official who served in a certain craft or held a protective function associated with a certain patron deity. Helck (1987) traced this title back to royal seals of Narmer imprinted on yellow clay locks used to securely shut vases and pouches. He described the symbol shown on the seal as a leopard with three bent rods coming out its back next to a “Zelt” (German for tent), probably leaning on Petrie’s (1901, p. 31; discussed below) description of it as a shrine built like a hut “with reed sides and interwoven palm rib roof”. Helck observed that both “leopard” and “tent” are associated with the name of a person. He speculated that these persons were scribes operating out of a tent near the king’s palace and represented the oldest form of dynastic government of the king’s estate. The overseer of these royal scribes had a title symbolized by a “swallowtail knife” (i.e. another cutting instrument symbol distinct from Gardiner T7) suggesting to Helck that it had predynastic roots in *Buto* (*Per-Wadjet* after unification of Up-

per and Lower Egypt). None of these interpretations explain the association of a bent rod emerging from (or entering) the back of a lioness with royal scribes and the origin or symbolic meaning of the shape of the tent in the form of an animal (see below). However, based on the evidence, it appears that these symbols are very ancient and probably predate even early dynastic Egypt, indicating that they represent a prehistoric reality which inspired them.

The correct interpretation of this tandem set of hieroglyphic symbols likely depends on identifying the correct context within which these two titles plausibly merged into an important task delegated to only a few individuals in the Old Kingdom. Without designating a meaning to the rod symbol this cannot be done. Since neither Gardiner nor Budge list this hieroglyph and IFAO's classification appears incorrect, it stands to reason that it was used to identify an unusual and uncommon object or idea.

We believe the most likely meaning is “key”, i.e. the rod symbol is a logogram or a word (for examples of similarly shaped keys and single/multiple tumbler locks in history see [Pitt-Rivers, 1883](#), Plates II and III). It is known that the ancient Egyptians had developed a lock and key device to secure an entree by at least the Middle Kingdom ([Rhind, 1862: p. 94](#); [Towne, 2017](#)). By then, the key was a tooth-brush like object used to displace wooden pins obstructing a wooden bolt. If indeed this bent rod-like symbol concretely encoded “key”, it presumably depicted a more primitive device used to dislodge only one pin inside of a bolt-like lock<sup>1</sup>. For reasons outlined below, however, we do not think this word stood on its own. Instead it, in combination with *Mehit*, formulated the more abstract concept of a *guard*, explaining why it was used as a symbol on seals imprinted onto clay locks to secure tomb goods such as vases and pouches. To further illustrate this, the ideogram “*khetem*” (Gardiner S20), for example, was the common semantic root of the words lock and seal.

Given this meaning, the interpretation of *Hemiunu*'s title immediately becomes more obvious. We can derive both a concrete and a more abstract meaning: Concretely, “Overseer of the Scribes of the King and Master of the Key to the Lioness” abstracts to “The King's Chief Librarian and Guardian of the Royal Archives of *Mehit*”. Here, we are now able to associate scribes with a lock-secured facility either dedicated to a lion goddess or, in fact, a facility made *in the shape of a recumbent lioness*. This is further corroborated by the way the rod symbol ostensibly enters the back of the lioness as if the latter physically bore the lock belonging to this key. “*Mehit*”, for example, would then have been the actual name of this secured facility in the same sense as “Fort Knox” is the name of a well-recognized secured vault where the United States keeps some of its gold reserves. Consequently, *Hemiunu* would have carried the title of “The King's Chief Librarian and Guardian of *Mehit*” [i.e. the vault]. But what kind of facility could *Mehit* have been?

The most obvious choice for Egyptologists to consider ought to be the

<sup>1</sup>For a demonstration of how this locking mechanism and key could have worked we refer the reader to the following YouTube video created by M.S. <https://youtu.be/C1PxxdMUwYI>

monumental Great Sphinx on the Giza Plateau (Figure 6), if it weren't for the orthodox opinion that it was not made until after *Khufu's* reign and was never made as a complete lion. Instead, current dogma states that the Great Sphinx (from Greek *sphingo* “to squeeze, to strangle”) was carved from the midst of *Khafre's* valley temple limestone quarry during the construction of his pyramid and was originally conceived as a man-lion chimera, never a complete lioness. The orthodox view (e.g. AERA, 2017) and its measured response (Schoch & Bauval, 2017) has been covered elsewhere. Here, we want to focus on the orthodox view's, arguably most crucial, presupposition that no extant written record refers to the Great Sphinx before the New Kingdom, let alone before the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

The current mainstream consensus dates the Great Sphinx to the reign of *Khafre* (circa 2520–2494 B.C.E.) at which time *Hemiu* may have already been dead and entombed. This suggests, however, that his statue and the inscription on its pedestal predate the reign of *Khafre* and thus bear witness to the possibility that a monumental stone lion serving as a secured vault to house the royal archives already existed when he was still alive. And in fact compelling geological, astronomical, mythological and artistic evidence supports a much older date for the creation of the original stone *monumentum aere perennius* (as is the case for the so-called Sphinx and valley temples and adjacent causeway as well) which only later gave rise to the Great Sphinx (Schoch & Bauval, 2017). Originally it was probably carved out of a rocky knoll into a partial stone lion(ess)<sup>2</sup> during the



**Figure 6.** The Great Sphinx on the Giza Plateau. The name “Sphinx” is Greek, not Egyptian, based on a myth from classic antiquity of a chimeric monster who kills those unable to solve its riddle. The generic Egyptian word for a sphinx is “shesepu”, Gardiner O42-Q3-G43-E151 or “hu” Gardiner V28-G43-E23. Of note is the phonetic inversion associating O42 and E151 (the actual pictograph of a sphinx), i.e. “SHeS”, and Y3, i.e. “SeSH”, which means scribe. Photograph by M.S., 2017.

<sup>2</sup>Possibly inspiring Gardiner F4, “h3t” and the semantic root it gives to the Egyptian word for “ancient”, “h3uti”, Gardiner F4-G43-X1-Z4-A1-Z3. Another example is “Seshat”, Thoth’s consort goddess. This could be a contraction of Sesh-h3t, i.e. “ancient scribe”, where ancient refers to the “first time” of the gods, zep-tepi.

11th Millennium B.C.E. The lower rump section can be confirmed to have been carved during the Old Kingdom (Schoch & Bauval, 2017: pp. 75-76), and at approximately the same time also, the original head was re-carved and remodeled into a dynastic face (possibly that of *Khufu*; Schoch and Bauval, pp. 142-151) creating the Great Sphinx out of a prehistoric monumental stone lioness.

Seismic probing has also revealed a hollow space beneath the Great Sphinx's northern paw and the signal demarcations and geometry suggest this space was man-made (Schoch & Bauval, 2017: pp. 81-82), raising the intriguing possibility of a hidden and secured stony vault within the bedrock under the Great Sphinx where ancient records may have been kept.

The name given to the Great Sphinx before the New Kingdom remains a mystery. From votive steles made during and after this era, it appears that the physical monument's name was *Hor-em-akhet*, which translates as "Horus in the Horizon". The mythical counterpart of the physical monument was likely known as "*Hor-akhty*", "Horus of the Two Horizons", as far back as the Old Kingdom (see discussion in Schoch and Bauval, pp. 152-162, although there "*Hor-akhty*" is translated more colloquially as "Horus of the Horizon"; Hassan, 1949, p. 138, translates "*Hor-akhty*" as "Horus the Dweller in the Horizon") and was probably inspired by the constellation Leo in whose direction the physical Sphinx was oriented on vernal equinoxes during the 11th and 10th Millennia B.C.E. and on summer solstices during the time of the Old Kingdom, i.e. during the 3rd Millennium B.C.E. (Schoch & Bauval, 2017: pp. 209-210).

During the Middle Kingdom, it is possible that the Great Sphinx was associated with (or even referred to as) *Aker*, because the anthropomorphic iconography used to depict it as *Hor-em-akhet* in the New Kingdom is reminiscent of that shown on apotropaic wands used as talismans to ward off evil (Wilkinson, 2003: p. 176). Therefore, it is possible and probable that the original, non-anthropomorphic physical monument had yet a different, to date unrecognized, name long before the New and Middle Kingdoms, and indeed long before the Pyramid Age, and it is this zoomorphic monument which inspired the long-enduring lion cults of *Mehit* and *Sekhmet* in Upper and Lower Egypt, respectively. *Mehit*, together with her consort *Anher*, was worshiped in the, as yet undiscovered, capital of predynastic and early dynastic Egypt (circa 3100 B.C.E. - 2700 B.C.E.), *Thinis*. We thus believe that the name of the Great Sphinx during the Old Kingdom and even before was *Mehit*. This was not appreciated because it was widely assumed that the Great Sphinx did not exist before the time of *Khafre* prompting researchers to proclaim that no reference to the Great Sphinx exists prior to the New Kingdom.

Specifically, the name "*Mehit*", spelled "Gardiner V22/23 - Gardiner X1 - Gardiner E23" (see Figure 7), gives an intriguing meaning: "A Uraeus on the brow of Ra [Re]" (Budge, 1920: Vol. 1, p. 317a). This meaning well comports with the lioness as the earthly enforcer of *Re's* will in Egyptian mythology. But the word *Mehit* also gives another meaning: Rain/Flood, i.e. a flood caused by torrential rains (Budge, 1920: Vol. 1, pp. 317b-318a). Semantically, therefore,

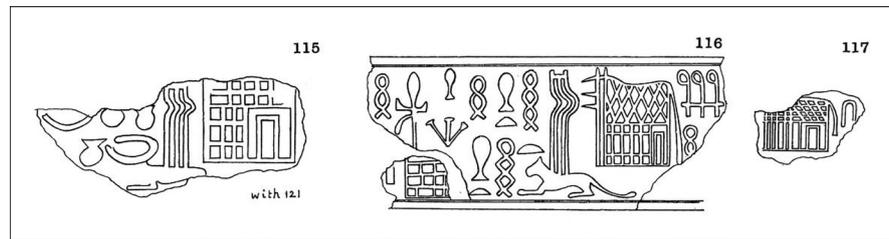


**Figure 7.** Magnified view of **Figure 5** focusing on “Mehit” which translates into “Uraeus on the Brow of Re” suggesting that the earthly lioness was a manifestation of Re in the sky and also linguistically associates the lioness Mehit with a deluge. Photograph courtesy of the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Regents of the University of California—catalog number 6-19825 (modified/cropped).

this word connects the idea of a solar lioness with the idea of prehistoric (i.e. ancient to the ancient Egyptians, see footnote 2) flooding from heavy rains which intriguingly points to an actual deluge at the end of the Younger Dryas, when the sun rose in the constellation Leo (Schoch, 2012), i.e. circa 9700 B.C.E., and whose monumental epoch marker we believe is the lioness precursor of the Great Sphinx on the Giza Plateau<sup>3</sup>. Since the same lioness named *Mehit* on the upper register of *Wepemnefret’s* stele (**Figure 7**) is also depicted in the second of the two tandem titles at the top of the right-most column on the same stele (**Figure 5**) and the pedestal of *Hemiunu’s* statue, we conclude, as have others concluded before us, that the title refers to this goddess.

Initially, we felt that the “key” symbol hovering above the *Mehit* symbol in *Hemiunu’s* and *Wepemnefret’s* tandem titles may have stood on its own as a hieroglyph and had a separate meaning, i.e. key, from that of the goddess, i.e. *Mehit*. However, on closer inspection this appears less likely considering the fact that the two appear as a contiguous unit in seal impressions (**Figure 8**) discovered in the tomb of King *Djer*, third ruler of “Dynasty I” who lived circa 500 years prior to *Hemiunu* and *Wepemnefret*. Instead, it appears that the meanings

<sup>3</sup>The phonetic value behind the ancient Egyptian word for “cubit”, their unit measure symbolized by the ideogram Gardiner D42, is represented by Gardiner V22/23, the same symbol used in the spelling of *Mehit*. This is also an interesting semantic association, because floods were measured in cubits using Nilometers, for example at Elephantine Island as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty as recorded on the Palermo Stone.



**Figure 8.** Sealings from the tomb of Djer, Abydos, “Dynasty I”, 31<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E. #116, depicts a lioness with a contiguous triple rod symbol emanating from her back next to an animal-like edifice with a five-chambered, gated complex beneath reminiscent of the way the Great Sphinx is depicted on the Dream Stele placed between the paws of the Great Sphinx by Thutmose IV (**Figure 9**). The four symbols immediately to the left of the lioness read “hm-t-h-t”, (Gardiner U36-X1-V28-X1) which may have been the primordial word later giving rise to “Mehit” or, more likely, could be translated as “hemet het?”. The temple/hall servant (feminine) in analogy to Hemiunu’s name’s spelling “hm-iunu”, “servant (masculine) of Iunu” (see **Figure 2**, left pedestal corner). We cannot dismiss the possibility that “ht” was the primordial form of “h3t” (see footnote 2) which would suggest that the very meaning of “Mehit” implied ancient times even to early dynastic scribes. From *The Royal Tombs of the Earliest Dynasties*, 1901. Part II, by W. M. Flinders Petrie, plate XVI.

of the two symbols were inseparably interwoven from their very origins with the key symbol representing the dominant, considering its size relative to the lioness, aspect of a more abstract, overarching meaning (**Figure 8**, #116).

Consequently, we interpret the two symbols, bent rod and lioness, as a one-word unit to refer to a certain aspect (*ba*) of *Mehit*, specifically her guardian attribute also captured by a keyed lock guarding a vault, i.e. an underground hall of chambers guarded by a giant animal-like edifice as depicted on *Djer*’s sealing. We believe the edifice depicted is the actual monument at Giza because of the reference to *[Ro]stau* (see below), but even if the depiction is of a hut or tent (Helck and Petrie, respectively) this structure could only have been a *Thinite* recreation of something present at Giza. This edifice was graphically represented conceptually identical throughout over 1600 years of ancient Egyptian history from the 31<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E. to circa 1400 B.C.E. (compare **Figure 8** and **Figure 9**) and, given our interpretation of the meaning of the tandem titles, it may be the actual, as yet elusive, House of *Thoth* where written records were stored and protected from vandals and the elements. We therefore predict that there likely is not a single written word in the ancient Egyptian language which utilizes the bent rod symbol by itself, explaining its absence from both Alan Gardiner’s and Wallis Budge’s catalogs of hieroglyphs and its obscure IFAO classification together with Gardiner P11. The likely reason is that the concept of a key was still unknown in protodynastic and early dynastic times except to a select few who knew it as a unique device to unlock the gate of a monument which already existed then.

We do not believe that the temporal proximity of the orthodox dating of the construction of the Great Sphinx as a lion-man and the hieroglyphic depiction of a complete lioness as part of both *Hemiunu*’s and *Wepemnefret*’s titular inscrip-



**Figure 9.** Relevant part of the Dream Stele of Thutmose IV, circa 1400 B.C.E (18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty). Beneath the Sphinx can be seen the “palace façade” also shown on the banner (se-rekh) of predynastic and early dynastic Egyptian kings. Photo by R.M.S. and his wife Catherine Ulisse, 2015.

tions forces the conclusion that another monument or building should be considered besides the Great Sphinx. We do not discount this possibility, but the identical title and symbolic representation can be seen on a wooden relief of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty official *Hesyt-Re* (Figure 10), who served under King Djoser, indicating that the very same edifice we believe is symbolized by the recumbent lioness hieroglyph predates the time of *Khafre* by at least a century and, as demonstrated by *Djer*'s sealing (Figure 8), by hundreds of years.

Petrie himself made a connection between the lioness in *Djer*'s sealing (Figure 8) and the one carved into the panel of *Hesyt-Re* (Figure 10) even though he thought the animal was a leopard and the building was a shrine depicting *Seth* (Petrie, 1901: p. 31), which we believe is in error for two reasons: First, the tail of the animal-edifice symbol (Figure 8, #116) is more lion- or jackal-like than aardvark-like. Second, it appears that Petrie interpreted the symbol to the right of the building as Gardiner D3, the determinative for hair, shown by Budge (1920: Vol. 2, p. 706b) as contextualizing the word “set” to mean “tail of an animal” and again shown further below on the same page as one version of the spelling of the name “Seth”, the god of chaos and evil; however, the more likely identity of this symbol is either Gardiner D61, “s3h”, which can mean toes or refer to the constellation Orion, or Gardiner V3 (ropes), “stau”, which is a fragment of “Rostau” (actually spelled “Re-stau-u” in coffin texts), i.e. the mythical sanctuary of Osiris's alter identity *Sokar*, the name of the Giza Plateau in ancient Egypt, and also where the Great Sphinx resides. The symbol can be better understood, if one realizes that Giza is riddled with subterranean caves into which one descends with ropes. In classic hieroglyphic style, therefore, a place with many caves can be symbolized with several ropes cast below ground symbolized by the horizontal line. This well explains why “stau” specifically refers to Giza. In other words, the depictions on *Djer*'s sealing shown in Figure 8 point to a monumental building in the shape of a lion on the Giza Plateau.

We therefore conclude that this rare title, “The King's Chief Librarian and



**Figure 10.** Wooden reliefs from the tomb of Hesy-Re, 3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty, Saqqara, Cairo Museum. The second of the tandem titles can be seen immediately above the head of Hesy-Re in the panel shown on the left. Remnants of the first title are above the second title, but are largely destroyed on this relief. Both titles can be seen intact side-by-side in a separate panel on the right. Photographs courtesy of Nagui Guorgui and Nancy Ray, Stylish Tours USA, 2017.

Guardian of the Royal Archives of *Mehit*”, conferred only to high-ranking members of the Old Kingdom’s royal court, presents further, i.e. philological, evidence that the Great Sphinx was made before the era assumed by orthodox Egyptology and was originally conceived as a lioness which early on became part of the central theology of both upper and lower ancient Egypt in the form of an earthly guardian enforcing the will of *Re*. If the Great Sphinx (a.k.a. *Mehit*), guarded an ancient repository of records, a real “House of *Thoth* and Hall of Records” or the Tomb of Osiris in the fifth division of the *duat* (Bauval, 2014: Chapter 4), the void beneath the northern paw is the prime candidate and ought to be explored before the elements and time destroy it.

The obvious counter to our analysis is that the recumbent lioness is a symbol inspired by the sight of lions basking in the morning sun and that this observation led to a mythological association between lions and the sun, i.e. *Mehit* and *Re*, which preceded the creation of the Great Sphinx and may even have inspired it. Our response to this counter is best summarized as follows: One does not insert a key into a real lioness. One inserts a key into a lock which opens the door to a vault guarded by a monument in the shape of a lioness. Our analysis of the inscriptions shown here, corroborating prior work as referenced, demonstrates that the creation of this stone lioness monument preceded the events of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, i.e. the carving of the lower rump section and the remodeling of the head to turn it into the Great Sphinx, and its imposing, monumental character probably inspired the various predynastic and dynastic lion cults in both Upper and Lower Egypt. As with any sound scientific theory that leads to testable predictions, ours makes three: a) Exploration of the void beneath the Great Sphinx will reveal a door secured by a bolt which will open with a device shaped similarly to the one shown in Figure 11, in other words a bent rod; b) the interior



**Figure 11.** Copper wire bent into the shape of the rod symbol. Copper or wood are the most likely materials from which this key would have been made. Photograph and recreation by M.S., 2017.

decoration of the void will reveal ornamentation similar to that seen on early royal banners, the *serekhs*, and similar to the exterior decoration on many sarcophagi; and c) this void will have five sub-chambers as seen in **Figure 8** providing the concrete basis for one of *Hemiuu*'s titles: "Great Priest of the Five of the House of *Thoth*" (*hm[u]-ur-duau-per-dehuty*).

Finally, a peculiar feature of the neck area of the Great Sphinx, best seen in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographs taken prior to modern repairs, can now be explained. The oblique limestone ridge (**Figure 12**, left pane) may have been the lowermost of a series of perhaps three to four ornamental neck rings also depicted on both *Wepemnefret*'s stele and *Hesyt-Re*'s wood panel (**Figure 12**, right pane). This suggests that the entire head of the Great Sphinx, including the headdress, was possibly carved out of the original monument's neck region, thus explaining its subsequent, noticeably disproportionate (i.e. small), size relative to the body (Schoch & Bauval, 2017: pp. 235-236). Whether or not the still extant ring, and possibly others now long obliterated by Old Kingdom remodeling, were part of the original design or a result of weathering over some 7500 years prior to Egypt's dynastic Nile civilization cannot be unequivocally determined except perhaps by the fact that the current ring is oblique and does not quite follow the same orientation as other weathered marks on the monument and its enclosure, less so laterally than anteriorly. In either case, however, this feature could have inspired the rings on *Mehit*'s neck.

Presumably then, the head and neck of the original lioness statue was more retro-flexed and upright than the forward-extended neck seen in the hieroglyphic representations, which may have been a necessary design feature to prevent breakage and frontal collapse of the head due to an otherwise uneven weight distribution on its neck base. Consequently, the rings on the Great Sphinx may be more functional than ornamental in providing stronger support against sheer and compressional forces created by rain, wind, and weight.

In summary, we have presented written, hieroglyphically recorded evidence that: a) two, heretofore incompletely translated, tandem titles conferred to *Hemiuu*, *Wepemnefret*, and *Hesyt-Re* are semantically interwoven within the context of overseeing the creation and secure storage of scribal documents; b) secure storage was concretely symbolized by a key-like device metaphorically "locking" the Upper Egyptian goddess *Mehit*; c) this mythical metaphor of *Mehit*'s aspect as a recumbent lioness guardian so symbolized was based on her physical,



**Figure 12.** Oblique neck-ring like ridge in the neck region of the Great Sphinx (left pane) and its possible counterpart on Mehit's neck (right pane). Left pane photograph circa 1880s [?], from the collection of R.M.S. Right pane photograph courtesy of the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Regents of the University of California—catalog number 6-19825 (modified/cropped).

monumental stony counterpart on the Giza Plateau long before the Fourth Dynasty, corroborating previous archeo-astronomical, geological, and seismographic evidence that the Great Sphinx is a modification of a much more ancient monument; and d) beneath this monument is a man-made, ornamented palace-like façade, and bolt lock-gated vault with chambers known to both 1<sup>st</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty kings, likewise corroborating prior seismographic evidence of a non-random, likely man-made, void beneath the north-east zone of the Great Sphinx. Our interpretation of this textual evidence is unequivocally testable and initially only requires a small drill hole and optic equipment to explore this already known void.

### 3. Conclusion

We have presented early dynastic and predynastic textual and physical evidence that a lion-like monument stood where the Great Sphinx still rests today and that this monument had a name: *Mehit*. We have also shown new evidence that the purpose of this monument, at least as early as the beginning of known writing in ancient Egypt, was to both symbolically and physically guard what royal scribes recorded when kingship originated and the Egyptian state was formed. Our evidence depends, in part, on how one interprets the unusually rare and primordial bent-rod hieroglyph found in the words describing an important title conferred to high officials at the royal court. When viewed within the context of the meaning to the ancient Egyptians of the lioness herself and the linguistic roots of her name, we feel confident in concluding that beneath the Great Sphinx are the remains of a royal library. However, absent physical evidence, we cannot be sure that predynastic Egyptians did in fact know a locking device whose bolt could be opened and closed using a key-like device; further study is needed. Therefore, to put this conclusion to the test, we have proposed a relatively non-invasive way to probe the subterranean location where a known void exists under the northern aspect of the Great Sphinx's front paws. Only an actual direct examination of this void, and other potential voids which may also exist nearby, will ultimately provide sufficient evidence to properly confirm or refute our hy-

pothesis.

## Dedication

We would like to dedicate this publication and its findings to John Anthony West and re-designate the heretofore untranslated bent-rod lioness tandem hieroglyph as the “J.A.W. Sign”.

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