



SPHINX AND PRISONER

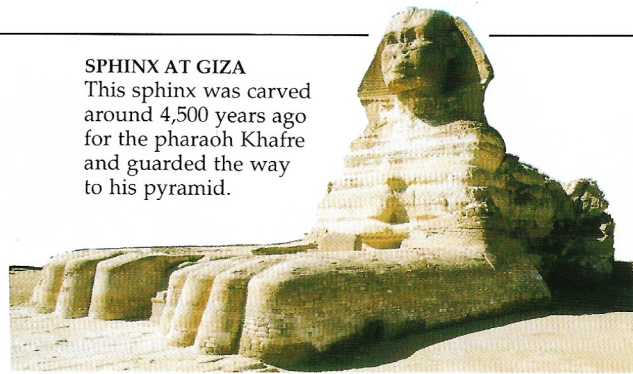
The way that the sphinx represents the pharaoh's power is shown in this ivory statuette, carved over 3,600 years ago.

The mystery of the sphinx

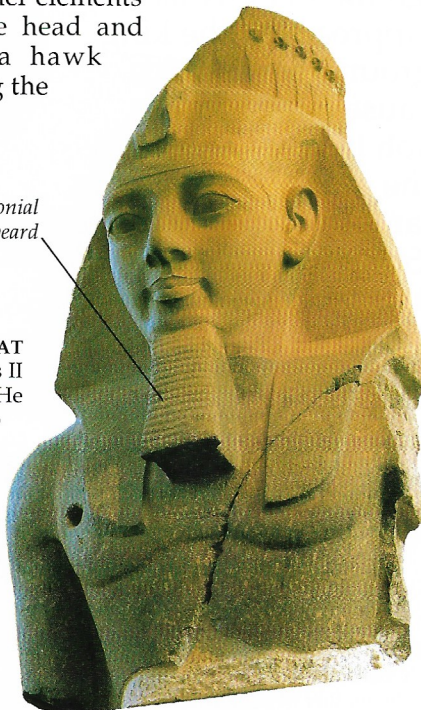
There has been a lot of confusion about sphinxes in ancient Egypt because of Greek legends. In the Greek myth of King Oedipus, the sphinx is a ferocious and lethal female creature who destroys men who are unable to solve the riddle she sets them. But the Egyptians saw the sphinx as a lion's body with the ruler's head. The lion was a creature of the sun-god and so emphasized the king's role as son of Re. The lion's strength also suggests the monarch's great power. Sometimes sphinxes combine other elements such as the head and wings of a hawk symbolizing the god Horus.

SPHINX AT GIZA

This sphinx was carved around 4,500 years ago for the pharaoh Khafre and guarded the way to his pyramid.



Ceremonial beard



Cobra goddess

Head cloth



Jar of sacred liquid

RAMESSES THE GREAT

In the 13th century B.C., Ramesses II reigned over Egypt for 67 years. He built more monuments and set up more statues than any other pharaoh. Among his buildings are the mortuary complex on the West Bank at Thebes, today called the Ramesseum, from which this statue comes. The king wears a royal headcloth called the "nemes", above which is a crown of cobras.



TUTANKHAMUN

This ruler came to the throne at only nine years old. He was obviously guided by his high officials, but seems to have been determined to bring back the old gods who had been banished by Akhenaten (see left). This famous golden mask comes from his tomb (p. 23).

TUTHMOSIS IV

This king was famous because he freed the great sphinx at Giza from the desert sand that had blown around it. He is portrayed on his knees holding two jars of sacred liquid. He is protected by the cobra goddess Wadjet on his forehead. Only kings and queens were entitled to wear cobra goddesses, who it was thought would deal out instant death by spitting flames at any enemies.