

Posted by: Shemsu Sesen (Keith Payne) – July 31, 2013

With the support of architectural and topographic evidence, Jean-Pierre Houdin is convinced that the Giza Sphinx represents King Khufu.

Part Three

Pyramidales :

Without being inspired by the phantasmagoric ideas of someone like Edgar Cayce, the ground below the Sphinx is the subject of considerations which are far from being elucidated. Some soundings, carried out in 1987 by technicians from Waseda University, have notably revealed the presence, below the Sphinx and in the surrounding area, of voids and tunnels. Other surveys have also been carried out, but the results of these explorations are surrounded with a halo of mystery strangely maintained.

The famous Champollion-Figeac wrote in his times: "The Sphinx near the pyramids has been studied, the sand clogging was momentarily removed, and it has been recognized that its colossal dimensions have allowed drilling, between the top of its fore paws and its neck, an entrance which is indicated by the jabs of a door. This door led to underground galleries dug in the bedrock on a very long distance, and at the end one found oneself in contact with the Great Pyramid".

So? Clues or pure ravings?

Jean-Pierre Houdin :

Those who uphold these esoteric theories don't have a great knowledge of the Giza Plateau, to say the least. As I mentioned before, the ground in the area of the Sphinx and the port is at level ASL20 and the bed of the Nile is slightly lower. We know that the port for the Khufu and Khafre building sites was in front of the Khafre's Valley Temple and the Sphinx. A piece of granite was discovered in the supposed area, at a depth around ten meters, during a drilling carried out in the 90's. Only a granite piece that had fallen from a ship can explain this discovery.

An underground Temple beneath the Sphinx? That's totally unthinkable

Moreover, the level of the phreatic layer is very close and we know what the consequences are: the need to frequently pump the excess water from below the Sphinx.

When one looks at the level of knowledge and expertise reached by the Ancient Egyptians, would an architect, engineer, hydrologist or geologist have embarked upon the construction of an underground Temple beneath the Sphinx given these circumstances? For me, that's totally unthinkable.

Otherwise, did the Egyptians during the time of the original construction take actions to try to resolve this water runoff problem?

One can ask oneself the question when one has a closer look at some details on site, along the Monumental Causeway and in the enclosure pit of the Sphinx.

At mid-way of the Monumental Causeway (the red circle on the aerial view below), on the North and South sides of the Causeway there are two exits of a tunnel dug under the Causeway. This tunnel could have been dug during the original construction in order to channel away the water runoff flowing from the sloping bottom of the northern quarry.



© Jean-Pierre Houdin / Google

This kind of guiding construction is quite curious and looks like a concrete tunnel running under the roads to let the water runoff.



© Jean-Pierre Houdin

View over the entrance of the tunnel on the South side of the Causeway



© Mathias Glad

The channeling of the water runoff from North to South seems to be confirmed by an analysis of the inside of the tunnel. A vertical shaft was dug into the southern sidewalk of the Causeway itself, but this seems to be a later addition.



© Mathias Glad

The tunnel intersects the Causeway a few meters below it. Traces of stagnating water are clearly visible on the lateral walls and on the floor.



© Mathias Glad

View over the entrance of the tunnel on the North side of the Causeway. This entrance has been partly filled with sand, like the quarry next to it. The bottom of the quarry and entrance of the tunnel must have been at the same level.

A detail which one can also notice under the Khufu's Monumental Causeway, in the section close to the Upper temple (below).



© Jean-Pierre Houdin / Airpano



© Jean-Pierre Houdin

It seems obvious that this tunnel, with a depth quite small, was not intended as a path for human beings, but more probably to channel the rainwater runoff.

Let's go back to the alternative theories claiming a web of tunnels and secret chambers holding the archives of a lost civilization; these theories are supposedly backed by a ground penetrating radar survey (GPR) which put forward the presence of voids in the underground. A polemic followed some years ago when the Egyptian Authorities admitted the presence of pits and tunnels, but without giving any further explanation. Of course, this silence from the officials led to a revival of rampant speculation from the supporters of these theories.

There could be a much more rational explanation about these shafts and tunnels than what has been put forward

We know perfectly well that there are three vertical shafts dug in the pit along the Sphinx (in the rear, on North and on South) and that these are linked to several tunnels; one of which should stretch, at minimum and from West to East, from the rear of the statue to the front paws, where masonry should block the path.

There could be a much more rational explanation about these shafts and tunnels than what has been put forward: the Egyptians could have dug a drainage network to fight against the flooding of the pit of the Sphinx by the rainwater runoff. The position of the vertical shafts just against the body of the Sphinx could mean that they are drainage throats linked to the East-West tunnel, this tunnel stretching far beyond what has been explored to reach the port from only a few dozen meters. The contemporary masonry which closes the tunnel would have been built to avoid back water and thus to reduce the water pumping.

The fact that the authorities keep the silent about these shafts and tunnels could be explained by their lack of interest for Egyptology.

But even more interesting, there is something which could support this idea: there is irrefutable evidence that the builders of Menkaure's pyramid (or their successors) had to confront a rain water runoff problem. Actually, taking again the diggings carried out between the two wars by Georges Reisner, Dr Mark Lehner and his team have discovered drainage and diversion networks, built in the ancient times, in the area of the Menkaure's Valley Temple; moreover, this temple was rebuilt several times following heavy deteriorations. A masonry-built spillway was discovered on the North side of the Causeway, very close to the Valley Temple (red ellipse on the 3D model below).



© Jean-Pierre Houdin / Dassault Systèmes / Giza 3D

As one can notice, the Giza Plateau is once again cut into two parts by Menkaure's Monumental Causeway. So, it seems obvious that the rain water runoff problem was recurrent because of the impassable barriers made by the Monumental Causeways. Not even the great engineers of the Fourth Dynasty could foresee every potential problem!

As a conclusion, don't forget that with time, the whole Giza Plateau was buried by sand and that the pit of the Sphinx was filled too, as well as the neighboring quarries. We know, thanks to Stela of Thutmosis IV, that the Sphinx enclosure was already completely filled with sand in 1400 BC. One can estimate that the sanding over of the Plateau goes back to the First Intermediate Period, around 2100 BC, when the necropolis was overrun by dwellings before being deserted at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom. The main erosion of the pit of the Sphinx by the air, sand and water must have only been possible during just over a quite short period of time, less than four centuries, to be compared to the age of the enigmatic Sphinx looking Eastward for 45 centuries.

Pyramidales :

Some authors favor the idea that the Sphinx and Khafre's pyramid, with its annexed monuments, are contemporary because it has been noticed that the limestone blocks used for the construction of the Valley Temple came from the pit in which the Sphinx was carved.

Do you see in that an argument which contradicts your own interpretation?

Jean-Pierre Houdin :

Certainly not! On one hand, the Valley Temple is itself practically built in its own quarry, and on the other hand, look at the quarry around the Sphinx; one can see that this quarry is divided into two parts: one directly around the Sphinx, and the other on North of it.

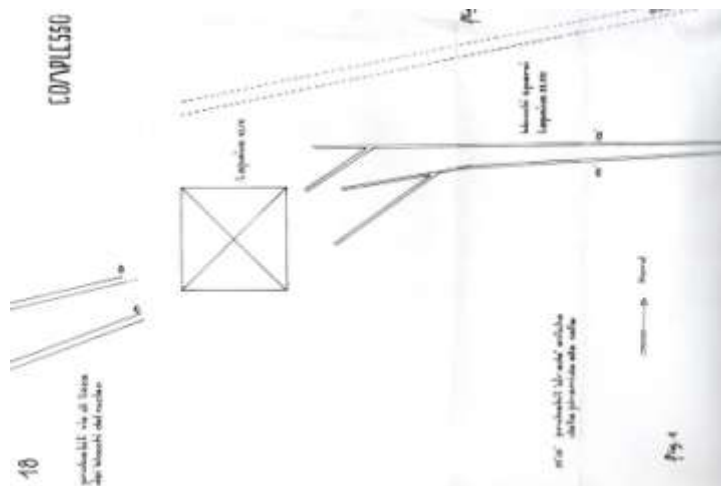
The second one is far less deep and stays at the level of the Valley Temple of Khafre while seeming to be posterior to the first part. So close to the Temple, the huge blocks quarried in this part would not have had a long trip to travel.



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The Sphinx and Khufu's Pyramid

At last and as a conclusion, I would pick up the first sentence of your introductory question: “Jean-Pierre Houdin, for nearly fifteen years, you are in a “close relationship” with the Giza Plateau”. I would like to add that I’ve also spent a lot of time studying the Dahshur site and both of Snefru’s pyramids, the Bent and the Red. I worked on their construction methods – also the inside-out methodology, of course – but with processes (external and internal ramps) adapted to each one, and a lot of 3D modeling has already been done. That said, the significance of the topography is, there again, the first thing that is quite obvious. At Dahshur, each pyramid is built on flat ground, evidence that Egyptians had technically no need to have a mound inside the monument to fix it, like a tooth on a post. Then, one can notice that the designers have stuck at the closest to the topography and adapted their construction processes regarding the quarries and ramps. After all these years of studies, I would say that I’m able, just looking at an aerial view of the Red pyramid, to explain in detail its construction through the reading of the developments brought in by the architects and topographers and which are still visible nowadays. I invite your readers to think about this while looking at this drawing made by Italian architects Maragioglio and Rinaldi in the 60’s and this Google aerial photo: for me, it’s like an open book.



Maragioglio and Rinaldi blue print with traces of access passage ways



A Google aerial view

Annexe :

Extracts from the presentation by Dr. Rainer Stadelmann previously cited Part 1, page 8:

“The southern limit of these quarries is clearly defined by the rocky escarpment on which Khafre later sited the causeway leading to his own pyramid. It is precisely because of these quarries of Khufu that Khafre’s Causeway does not follow an E-W path to its temple in the valley, but deviates visibly to the south. This means that to define the path of his causeway, Khafre had to take account of an existing layout, a significant older structure that he had to go around, which required a change in the normal line of the causeway, and not the other way round, as has always been claimed. Well this object could only have been the Great Sphinx. Thus, the rectangular cavity at the centre of which the Sphinx was cut straight from the rock was certainly part of Khufu’s quarries. This can be supported by comparing the stone from different courses of the Great Pyramid with various formation layers observed on the rocks that form the body of the Sphinx and the walls of the cavity. The sequence of blocks coming from the various layers is clearly identified by the type of erosion. At the start, the surface of the rock on which the Great Sphinx was cut would have to be considerably higher than the rocky plain that extends towards the south. It is likely that it was as high as the northern apron on which the tombs of the royal sons were built or at least at the same height as the mound at the extreme south that includes remnants of the quarries of Khafre and Menkaure.”

“The entire mass of the original promontory between the current ground level in the depression of the Sphinx and the upper level of the plateau of the Great Pyramid, some 20 m in height, was extracted to supply blocks for the body of the stonework for the Great Pyramid.”

“We therefore wonder why Khufu would have fortuitously left a mound at the southern end of his quarries, where Khafre and his craftsmen could later improvise the idea of sculpting a Sphinx, as is generally supposed. In my opinion, this idea is not convincing.”

“Naturally, the single fact that the Great Sphinx occupies the southern limit of Khufu’s quarries still does not prove that it was undoubtedly Khufu who had the idea to have it sculpted. Even so, it is unthinkable that during such a prodigious reign and in a funereal complex of such rigorous and large-scale design, the rarely equaled perfection of which makes it still one of the wonders of the world today, a rock would have been left by chance on the southern edges of the most extraordinary construction site. Moreover, the rock is located very close to the valley and is therefore visible to those living in the nearest dwellings.””

