

# THE EARLY M.C. OF THE SPHINX AND THE PYRAMIDS OF GIZA

During the first two decades of this century, collectors of used stamps who were also postcard collectors, started to collect cards bearing the stamp on the view side of the card, better known as T.C.V. viz. *Carte timbre cote vue*. At the same time Europeans visiting or posted in Egypt (probably T.C.V. collectors), started sending such cards to their friends back home. They got the stamps picturing the Pyramids or the Sphinx that were in circulation for many years and they easily found similar postcards and attached the stamps on the view side of the cards and mailed them to their friends. Thus unintentionally creating the first true Maximum Cards. This in turn gave birth to the intentional creation of other early M.C., known as *Analogical Cards*, e.g. the *Semeuse* in France, *Luitpold* in Bavaria, *Alphonse XIII* in Spain, *Franz-Joseph* in Austria, etc. The term «*Carte Maximum*» was first introduced in 1932.

In figure 1 of the **Sphinx**, we see one of the earliest M.C. with a **Cairo** cancellation of **15 XI 1904** on the Yvert N. 41 stamp of the *Sphinx & Cheops Pyramid*. This card was published by *Lichenstern & Harari, Cairo, N. 461*, and was mailed to a certain «*Mr. Charles Daclin Chef d'Orchestre*» in *Clermont Ferrand, France*.

The man headed lion statue of the Sphinx stands 65 ft (19.8 m) high and 240 ft (73.2 m) long. It is cut from a natural outcrop of limestone. It represents an aspect of the sun god *Re-Harakhte*. The origin of the term «*sphinx*» is possibly derived from the Egyptian words «*sheep ankh*» meaning «*living image*». The head of the Sphinx has been badly damaged by sand erosion and dampness. Both the nose and the beard have been broken away. Nose fragments are kept at the Cairo Museum, and a small beard fragment at the British Museum.

In figure 2 we see another early M.C. of the **Sphinx and the Great Pyramid of Cheops**. It bears a **Cairo** cancellation of **7 III 1905** on the Yv. 32 stamp of the *Sphinx & Cheops Pyramid*. This colour postcard was published by *Lichtenstern & Harari N. 1*, and was mailed to *Paris, France*.

The *Great Pyramid of Cheops* stands 146.6 m (481 ft) high, and its base is 230.3 m (756 ft) square, and it comprises an estimated 2.5 million limestone blocks, of about 2.5 tons each *Cheops* (or *Khufu*) was the great king of the 4th Dynasty and ca 2550 BC he chose to build his monumental Pyramid tomb on a high rocky ridge on the west side of the river Nile, about 24 km (15 m) north of the ancient capital of Memphis. The Pyramid was originally planned to have a subterranean burial chamber approached by a descending passage; however



Fig. 1

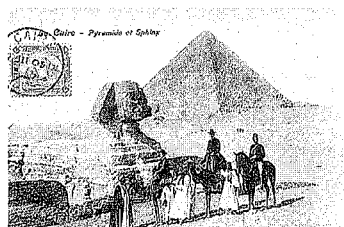


Fig. 2

the plan was changed to a chamber within the Pyramid, and an ascending passage had to be cut.

In **figure 3** we see on the card the **Pyramids of Cheops and of Chephren**. The card bears the Yv. 36 stamp of the *Sphinx & Cheops Pyramid* facing down, with a cancellation of **15 V 1905**. Unfortunately the cancellation is from **Zagazig**, a town at 40 m North-East of Cairo. This card was published by *Lichtenstern & Harari N. 681* and was mailed to *Buenos-Ayres, Argentina*.

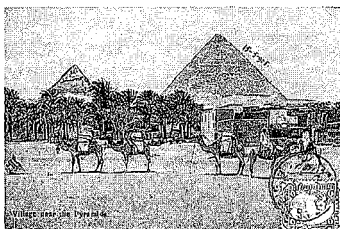


Fig. 3

The *Pyramid of Chephren (or Khaefre)* son of Cheops, lies south of the Great Pyramid, only 3 m (10 ft) lower than that of Cheops, but on a higher place, thus dominating the plateau of Giza. The base of Chephren's pyramid is 215 m (708 ft) square, its height 143.5 (471 ft). It is easily distinguished from the Great Pyramid by its cap, the intact layers of limestone covering, at its peak. It has two entrances, one above the other, leading to a single horizontal corridor at the surface of the underlying bedrock. The burial chamber is also cut in the face of the rock.

In **figure 4** we see on a card of the **Sphinx and the Great Pyramid 3 stamps**.

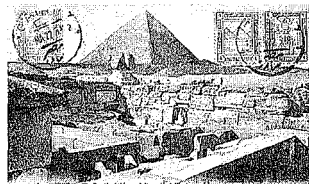


Fig. 4

On the left Yv. 61 the *Sphinx*, on the right Yv. 59 the *three Pyramids of Giza*; and Yv. 57 *Cleopatra*. This last stamp is unrelated. This document is a good example, showing that the sender had neither the intention nor the knowledge of creating a true Maximum Card. The cancellation is **Cairo 12 MAY 1922**. This card was published by *Levy & Cie, Paris, N. 4* and was mailed to *Warsaw, Poland*.

In **figure 5** we see on the card and on the more recent stamp of P.A. Yv. 81 the **three Pyramids of Giza**. The cancellation is **Cairo 22 MAR 1960**. This card is not addressed. The *small Pyramid* is that of *Mycerinus (or Menkaure)*, who probably was one of Chephren's brothers. It is the most southerly Pyramid and stands only 61 m (204 ft) tall and it is dwarfed by the other two Pyramids, being approximately a quarter of their bulk.

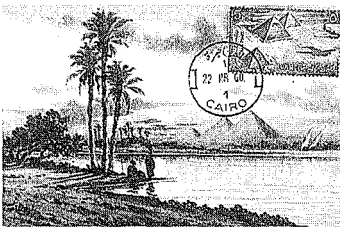


Fig. 5

The afore mentioned Maximum Cards are from the collection of the author.

(George Costantourakis)

## NATALE IN PUGLIA

Il 18 novembre u.s. è stata distribuita in tutti gli uffici postali la serie di due francobolli natalizi 1995.

Il valore di 750 lire è dedicato al «PRESEPE MONUMENTALE» di Polignano a Mare (Bari), che gode di grande venerazione, tra i fedeli pugliesi (\*).