

## A lion in a lettuce?

### Some ideas on a group of late Old Kingdom maceheads<sup>\*</sup>

Andrés Diego Espinel

Instituto de Lenguas y Culturas del Mediterráneo y Oriente Próximo – CSIC, Madrid

andres.diego@cchs.csic.es

**D**URING THE FIRST DECADES of the 20<sup>th</sup> century several piriform or *hq*-maceheads carved with a hard-tipped leaf scale motif were retrieved around the mortuary complex of king Teti (6<sup>th</sup> dynasty) at Saqqara [fig. 1]. In 1906-1907, Quibell discovered “parts of two of them made of reddish limestone” probably at the east of the king’s pyramid<sup>1</sup>. At least three other limestone maceheads “were found in the offering room or in the rubbish near it” by Firth and Gunn while digging in the Teti pyramid temple in the early 1920s<sup>2</sup>. Two of the former were given by the Egyptian Antiquities Service to the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston in 1924<sup>3</sup>. The rest, along with other ones probably discovered about the same time, went to the Cairo Museum. Five of them are currently on display in the Imhotep Museum at Saqqara<sup>4</sup>. Almost all of the published examples are made of limestone, but, at least, there is a wooden example at Boston<sup>5</sup>. According to the images at hand of the four published limestone examples, all of them were inscribed with the Horus name of Teti (*s.tꜥp tꜥ.wy (rdi nḥ)*) and a brief phrase connected to the practical use of these weapons: “subduing the *znty.w*-rebels (*dꜥ znt(y.w)*)”<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, two of them contain a cartouche with the name of

---

<sup>\*</sup> I thank Francisco Borrego Gallardo (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) for the critical reading of a preliminary draft of this article and for his comments that have enriched significantly this paper.

<sup>1</sup> E.J. QUIBELL, *Excavations at Saqqara (1906-1907)*, Cairo, 1908, p. 72, pl. 5 [3]. Quibell did not precise the place of their discovery, but since they are published in the same plate that some objects found in that part of the Teti mortuary complex (*ibid.*, p. 3, pl. 5 [2] [4]), they could come from there too. According to J.-Ph. LAUER, J. LECLANT, *Mission archéologique de Saqqarah I. Le temple haut du complexe funéraire du roi Têti, BiEtud 51*, Cairo, 1972, p. 99 [17], they *ont été trouvées dans le temple de Têti, mais on ne possède que peu d’indications sur elles*.

<sup>2</sup> C.M. FIRTH, B. GUNN, *Excavations at Saqqara - Teti pyramid cemeteries I. Text*. Cairo 1926: 8. They mentioned (*ibid.*) that “pieces of a similar macehead had already been discovered by Quibell”.

<sup>3</sup> Boston MFA 24.601-602, Y.J. MARKOVITZ, J.-L. HAYNES, R.E. FREED, (eds.), *Egypt in the age of the pyramids. Highlights from the Harvard University-Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Expedition*, Boston, 2002, p. 119 [52].

<sup>4</sup> Cairo JE 49372-3, 39163, 47227 ; J.-P. ADAM, Chr. ZIEGLER, *Les pyramides d’Égypte*, Paris, 1999, p. 92. A fragment of Cairo JE 49372-3 was discovered by Quibell, *op. cit.*, pl. 5 [3]. It is not possible to identify the other macehead on that plate with the ones published by Adam and Ziegler. PM III<sup>2</sup> 395 reckons the maces as: “Three and a fragment, in Cairo Mus. JE 49372-3, 39163, 47225. Two (JE 49372-3), QUIBELL, *Saqqara (1906-1907)*, pl. v [3], p. 72; another two, GUNN MSS. xiv. 1 [2] (photo), xiv. 1A (texts of three); texts of two, QUIBELL, *op. cit. (1907-1908)*, p. 20 [middle]”.

<sup>5</sup> Boston MFA 24.602.

<sup>6</sup> On *znty.w*, see A. DIEGO ESPINEL, *Etnicidad y territorio en el Egipto del Reino Antiguo, AulEg-Stud 6*, Barcelona, 2006, p. 139; M. OMAR, *Auführer, Rebellen, Widersacher: Untersuchungen zum Wortfeld “Feind”*

the king (*titi/s3 r' titi*) too<sup>7</sup>. No published pictures and descriptions of the Teti maceheads offer any trace or mention of their original colour (if they were ever painted).



Fig. 1. An example of Teti's hard-tipped leaf scaled maceheads. Saqqara, Imhotep Museum (no inventory number stated) (photo: Juan R. Lázaro, distributed under a CC-BY-2.0 license; <<https://secure.flickr.com/photos/71637794@N04/6686051937/>> accessed 15 August 2020).

Notwithstanding their peculiar decorative scale-like pattern, these objects have rarely attracted interest from researchers. Generally, they have been considered vegetal motifs. For instance, Adam and Ziegler have pointed out that they *sont particulièrement remarquables par leur décor de losanges évoquant un végétal, détail qui est repris sur les bas-reliefs du Moyen Empire*<sup>8</sup>. In the following lines an alternative interpretation on this decoration will be proposed by using some iconographic and textual data. In any case, as it will be seen below, this proposal is just a possibility, since such pieces of information are not sustained by talkative documentation but by a thin line of reasoning and evidence.

---

*im pharaonischen Ägypten. Ein lexikalisch-phraseologischer Beitrag*, ÄAT 74, Wiesbaden, 2008, p. 202-205 [13]; *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* (TLA) lemma-no. 138610 <<http://aaw.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/GetWcnDetails?u=guest&f=0&l=0&wn=138610&db=0>> (accessed 30 May 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Some *hq*-maceheads with the *serekh* and the cartouche of Khafre were discovered in the valley temple of his mortuary complex at Giza, see G. STEINDORFF, "B. Die übrigen Fundstücke", in U. Hölscher, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Chephren*, *Sieglin Exp.* 1, Berlin, 1912, p. 105-115, esp. p. 106-107, fig. 156.

<sup>8</sup> ADAM, ZIEGLER, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

## Parallels and previous interpretations

Other to Teti's examples, similar maceheads decorated with hard-tipped leaf scale motifs are depicted in monuments from different periods. The following is an illustrative, if not comprehensive list of examples: a relief from a chapel of Mentuhetep III at Elephantine (11<sup>th</sup> dynasty)<sup>9</sup>; some depictions in two repository chapels of Senusert I at Karnak (12<sup>th</sup> dynasty)<sup>10</sup>; two smiting scenes of Amenhetep II in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> pylons of Amun's temple at Karnak (18<sup>th</sup> dynasty);<sup>11</sup> the maces held by the *ka*-statues from the tomb of Tutankhamun (18<sup>th</sup> dynasty);<sup>12</sup> and a similar wooden mace discovered in its funerary chamber<sup>13</sup>; and a relief of Sethi I (19<sup>th</sup> dynasty) in his temple at Abydos<sup>14</sup>.

Just as the limited number of their instances, there are very few interpretations on their nature and meaning too. Researchers have often overlooked this type of maceheads or have not given any explanation of this motif. For instance, when publishing the scenes of the white chapel of Senusert I at Karnak, Lacau and Chevrier named this kind of mace as *massue à tête en écailles* (scaled macehead), but they did not give further interpretations<sup>15</sup>. The aforementioned identification by Adam and Ziegler of the pattern as a vegetal motif was preceded many years before by a similar idea by Keimer. In 1924, the German egyptologist considered them as *nḥb.t*-sceptres that, according to him, depicted a lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*)<sup>16</sup>. On another hand, a blue macehead of this type of Middle Kingdom (?) date and made of faïence has been described by an anonymous collaborator of the Brooklyn Museum as decorated "with lotus petals"<sup>17</sup>. However, Norris has recently questioned Keimer's identification, because she considers that there are great differences between this patterned type of macehead and the vegetable<sup>18</sup>. Contrarily to Norris' opinion, both patterns are

<sup>9</sup> Cairo JE 39748; R. MOND, O. H. MYERS, *The temple of Armant. A preliminary survey*, MEEF 43/1-2, London, 1940, p. 166-167, pl. 88 (<[1]> top left).

<sup>10</sup> P. LACAU, H. CHEVRIER, *Une chapelle de Sésostri I<sup>er</sup> à Karnak II. Planches*, Cairo, 1969, pl. 13 [sc. 4]; 14 [sc. 6]; 16, xxviii [sc. 10]; 17 [sc. 11]; 31 [sc. 10']; 35 [sc. 18']; xxvii [sc. 18']; A. ARNAUDIÈS, N. BEAUX, A. CHÉNÉ, *Une chapelle de Sésostri I<sup>er</sup> à Karnak*, EdE 13, Paris, 2015, pl. 13 [sc. 4]; 14 [sc. 6]; 16, xxviii [sc. 10]; 17 [sc. 11]; 31 [sc. 10']; 35 [sc. 18']; xxvii [sc. 18']; L. COTELLE-MICHEL, "Présentation préliminaire des blocs de la chapelle de Sésostri I<sup>er</sup> découverte dans le IX<sup>e</sup> pylône de Karnak", *CahKarn* 11, 2003, p. 339-363, esp. p. 355, fig. 3.

<sup>11</sup> <<http://www.cfeetk.cnrs.fr/archives/?n=57176>> accessed 1 September 2020 (7<sup>th</sup> pylon, southern wall of the western side); LD III 61 (8<sup>th</sup> pylon, southern wall of the western side).

<sup>12</sup> Cairo JE 60707; JE 60708; PM I<sup>2</sup> 570 [4].

<sup>13</sup> Cairo JE 61623;

<<http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/perl/gi-ca-qmakesumm.pl?sid=161.111.72.91-1599645904&qno=1&curr=233>> (accessed 9 september 2020). H. Carter described its decoration as "an incised net-work or cone-pine pattern", see

<<http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/perl/gi-ca-qmakedeta.pl?sid=161.111.72.91-1599645904&qno=1&dfnam=233-c233>> (accessed 9 september 2020).

<sup>14</sup> A. MARIETTE-BEY, *Abydos I. Description des fouilles exécutées sur l'emplacement de cette ville*, Paris, 1869, pl. 50; PM VI 26 [241-242].

<sup>15</sup> E.g., LACAU, CHEVRIER, *op. cit.*, p. 64 [136].

<sup>16</sup> KEIMER, L. *Die Gartenpflanzen im Alten Ägypten. I. Band*, Hamburg, Berlin 1924, p. 77-78.

<sup>17</sup> Brooklyn, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund 59.199.2;

<<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3677>> accessed 30 April 2020.

<sup>18</sup> P. NORRIS, "The lettuce connection. A re-examination of the association of the Egyptian god Min with the lettuce plant from the Predynastic to the Ptolemaic Period", PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2015, p. 173-174.

reasonably similar<sup>19</sup>, but their shapes are definitely different (lettuces depicted in Egyptian art are much longer and thinner) and shed doubts about the vegetal inspiration for these maces.

### A new interpretation

The geometric pattern on Teti's maceheads, that renders their surface uneven, could have practical aims, since it could cause more damage than a smooth piriform *ḥd*-mace. However, considering that the motif appears briefly, but consistently along a millennium of the history of ancient Egypt, it is probable that it wasn't only a stylish fancy with no symbolic intentions. The identification of these maceheads with a precise vegetable (a lettuce, an artichoke?)<sup>20</sup> is difficult to explain, even though the *ḥd*-mace could be inspired in the shape of an onion (*ḥdw*)<sup>21</sup>. It is hard to believe that the lettuce or, less feasibly, the artichoke were related to one of the more frequently depicted weapons in the official smiting scenes. In this regard, the hard-tipped leaf scale decoration on these maceheads seems to be better inspired by the animal world, and particularly by the lions (*Panthera leo*), because of two different circumstances:

First, the detailed and well-prepared patterns in Teti's maceheads have a great resemblance with a motif that depicts the outer parts of the lions' mane. It was described by Schweitzer as "an inverted bottle-shaped shag (*umgekehrt flaschenförmig Zotteln*)"<sup>22</sup>. Its first known example is the mane of a mid 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty granodiorite (?) lion's head from a gargoyle in the mortuary complex of Niuserre at Abusir<sup>23</sup>, but a similar pattern is already attested in earlier times as it is evident in the predynastic "Battlefield palette", or in an early dynastic ivory gaming piece from the tomb of Djer at Umm el-Qaab<sup>24</sup>. Similar examples are also attested, for instance, in several lions with human faces during the Middle Kingdom<sup>25</sup>, the New Kingdom<sup>26</sup>, and the Kushite

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., the lettuces depicted in the mortuary complexes of Sahure and Pepy II in L. BORCHARDT, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Sa'hu-re II. Die Wandbilder*, WDOG 26, Leipzig, 1913, pl. 61, 63; G. JÉQUIER, *Le monument funéraire de Pepi II II. Le temple*, Cairo, 1938, pl. 76-80, 92-96, 100-104.

<sup>20</sup> There is no conclusive evidence of artichokes (*Cynara scolymus*) in ancient Egypt, see L. KEIMER, *Die Gartenpflanzen im alten Ägypten I*, Hamburg, Berlin, 1924, p. 78 [12]. For some (dubious) examples, see A. EL-KERET, "Recent work in the tomb of Nebkauhor at Saqqara", in N. Strudwick, H. Strudwick (eds.), *Old Kingdom, new perspectives: Egyptian art and archaeology 2750-2150*, Oxford, 2011, p. 1-8, esp. p. 7-8.

<sup>21</sup> The onion could be a magical element against hostile forces according to A. NIWIŃSKI, "The origin of the two sacred white attributes of the early Egyptian king: crown and mace", in K. Ciałowicz, J. Ostrowski, (eds.), *Les civilisations du bassin Méditerranéen: hommages à Joachim Sliwa*, Krakow, 2000, p. 155-162. On the properties of onions against the venom of the snakes, see A. M. ROSSO, "Antidotes and counter-poisons in the ancient world: onions (*ḥdw*) (*Allium cepa* L.) in Egypt, the preferred antitoxic for snake bites", *JARCE* 55, 2019, p. 173-187; for a clear identification of the *ḥd*-mace with the onion, see J.Fr. QUACK, "Zwiebel und Keule", *SAK* 24, 1997, p. 231-239.

<sup>22</sup> U. SCHWEITZER, *Löwe und Sphinx im Alten Ägypten*, *ÄgForsch* 15, Glückstadt, Hamburg, 1948, p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Berlin ÄM 16700; PM III<sup>2</sup> 336; O. ZORN, "Le lion, symbole du pouvoir", in M. González Menéndez (ed.), *Des lions et des hommes – Mythes félins: 400 siècles de fascination*, Paris, 2019, p. 60-65, esp. p. 62 [cat. 26].

<sup>24</sup> London BM EA 20791 and BM EA 35529 respectively; D. CRAIG PATCH, "Early Dynastic art", in *id.* (ed.), *Dawn of Egyptian art*, New York, 2011, p. 136-179, esp. p. 147 [cat. 123]; W.F.M. PETRIE, *The royal tombs of the first dynasty: 1901 II*, MEEF 21, London, 1901, pl. 6 [4].

<sup>25</sup> Cairo CG 393, CG 394, CG 530, CG 1294, JE 87082, N. 419; Berlin ÄM 22580; Munich ÄS 7132; B. FAY, *The Louvre sphinx and royal sculpture of the reign of Amenemhat II*, Mainz am Rhein, 1996, p. 65 [\*23] (Berlin 22580); 67 [41; \*42; 43-47] (Cairo CG 391; Munich ÄS 7132; Cairo CG 393; CG 394; CG 530; CG 1243; JE 87082); for similar examples, see *ibid.*, p. 64 [\*20; 21] (Louvre A 23; Cairo JE 37478 + CG 638); 65-66 [\*27-31] (private collection; Boston MFA 88.747; Cairo CG 1119; New York MMA 17.9.2; Karnak); 66 [\*39] (private collection); 67 [48] (Cairo N. 419); see also E. WARMENBOL (ed.), *Sphinx. Les gardiens d'Égypte*, Brussels, 2006, p. 208 [50-51].

Period<sup>27</sup>. The same patterns, but more schematically carved, also appear on the manes of the Sekhmet statues of Amenhetep III, for instance<sup>28</sup>.

Second, in some instances the shape of the hairy tuft of the lion's tail in Egyptian art is similar to the *hḏ*-maceheads. A good example is a relief from the mortuary temple of Sahure at Abusir (5<sup>th</sup> dynasty)<sup>29</sup>, but it is also evident on some other private and official reliefs<sup>30</sup>. Such similarity seems to be a convention since the actual tips of the tails are different. Visual puns where animals and weapons interplay were not new in Egyptian iconography. Zoomorphic images of the god Seth often included tails with the shape of different weapons. For instance, during the Old Kingdom they were represented as *hḏ*- and disc shaped maceheads, and arrow fletchings. The repertoire even increased in later periods, with tails like axe heads, staves with forked finials, or clubs<sup>31</sup>.

Back to the depictions of the lion's tail as a *hḏ*-mace, the curved tail upwards in the reliefs of sphinxes and/or griffins that trample down foreign enemies recall, because of its place and arrangement in the scene, the raised arm of the king while holding the *hḏ*-mace in the smiting scenes<sup>32</sup>. In fact, both types of scenes have analogous ideological intentions and meanings. They were also attested in later periods, as it is the case, for instance, of two pectorals discovered in the tomb of the princess Mereret (B) at Dahshur (12<sup>th</sup> dynasty)<sup>33</sup> [fig. 2, a-b]. Of course, a univocal identification of the lion's tail with the mace should be taken with caution, as the tails of sphinxes and lions were often depicted or sculpted differently to the motif under study. In some cases they were shaped as other symbols of royal power. This is the case of the Louvre sphinx of Amenemhat II and two other sphinxes of Senwosret III that have an elongated tail with a zig-zag pattern which recalls the same motif in the bovine royal beard that is also present in the two former examples<sup>34</sup>. Actually, according to Köller, the long tuft in the tail of these statues could depict the bull's tail worn by the kings in order to mix in the

<sup>26</sup> Cairo JE 53113, New York MMA 31.3.94; R. TEFNIN, *La statuaire d'Hatshepsout, MonAeg* 1, Brussels, 1979, p. 129-133; C.A. K[ELLER], "89. Hatshepsut as a maned sphinx," in C.H. Roehrig (ed.), *Hatshepsut. From Queen to pharaoh*, New York, New Haven, London 2006, p. 166 [89]. The mane of the Cairo sphinx is painted in blue. The lions' manes in some reliefs in Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el Bahari have similar patterns, see N. BEAUX, "King, lion and falcon at Deir el-Bahari: from *rw.ty* to Horus. A study of the ramp newel posts in the temple of Hatshepsut", *PAM* 24/2, 2015, p. 61-74, esp. p. 65, fig. 4; 68, fig. 8.

<sup>27</sup> BM EA 1770, Torino inv. C1413; Warmenbol (ed.), *op. cit.*, 210 [54].

<sup>28</sup> S. CONNOR, *Le statue della dea Sekhmet*, Torino, 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Berlin ÄM 21832; BORCHARDT, *op. cit.*, pl. 8.

<sup>30</sup> M. BAUD, *Famille royale et pouvoir sous l'Ancien Empire, BiEtud* 126, Cairo, 1999, p. 201, fig. 21.

<sup>31</sup> I.R. TAYLOR, "Deconstructing the iconography of Seth", PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2016, p. 264-273, 324; for different examples of these tails, see *ibid.*, 566-572 [3.3.1-3.3.67].

<sup>32</sup> BORCHARDT, *op. cit.*, pl. 8; in this relief (Berlin ÄM 21832), captioned as "trampling the rebels (*ptpt znty.w*)", there is another visual metaphor that enriched the meaning of the scene, see W.V. DAVIES, "Hands and hearts (Berlin 1157): an alternative", *JEA* 62, 1976, p. 176-177. For other examples of sphinxes and griffins, see G. JÉQUIER, *Le monument funéraire de Pepi II III. Les approches du temple*, Cairo, 1940, pl. 15-18, where there are no remains of the tips of their tails; see also BEAUX, *PAM* 24/2, 2015, p. 71.

<sup>33</sup> Cairo CG 52002 and CG 52003; W. GRAJETZKI, *Tomb treasures of the late Middle Kingdom – The archaeology of female burials*, Philadelphia, 2014, p. 88-89, figs. 68-69 respectively.

<sup>34</sup> Louvre A 23, New York MMA 17.9.2 and London BM EA 1849. On the two latter, see F. POLZ, "Die Bildnisse Sesostris' III. und Amenemhets III. Bemerkungen zur königlichen Rundplastik der späten 12. Dynastie", *MDAIK* 51, 1995, p. 227-238, esp. p. 242-243, fig. 4 [A]. On the bovine origin of the royal beard, see S. HENDRICKX, M. DE MEYER, M. EYCKERMAN, "On the origin of the royal false beard and its bovine symbolism", in M.A. Jucha, J. Dębowska-Ludwin, P. Kołodziejczyk (eds.), *Aegyptus est imago caeli – Studies presented to Krzysztof M. Ciałowicz on his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday*, Krakow, 2014, p. 129-143.

same image the pharaoh as a human, feline and bovine being<sup>35</sup>. In the same line, the presence of tails like *h*q-maces in griffins, sphinxes or lions depicted in the smiting scenes would play a similar role, as they enhanced the bellicose nature of these animals, and identified them with the king as victorious leader.

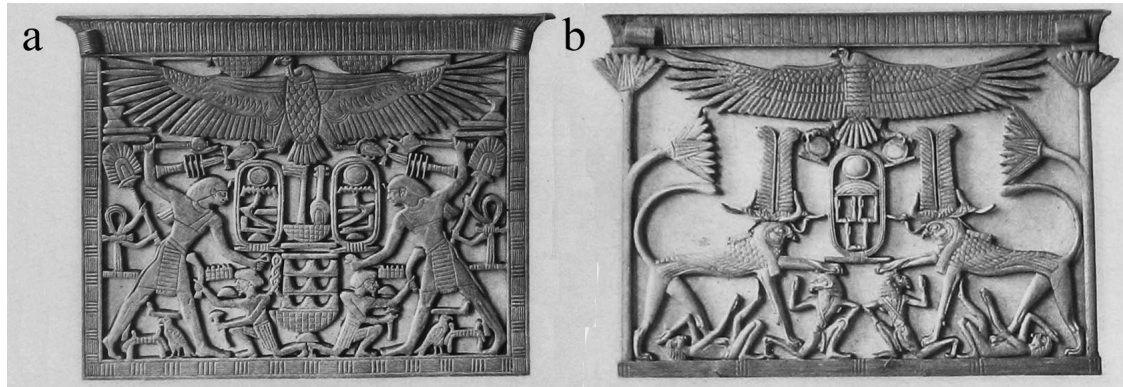


Fig. 2, a-b. Pectorals of Mereret at Cairo Museum. a) Cairo CG 52003; b) Cairo CG 52002 (photos: from J. DE MORGAN, *Fouilles à Dahchour. Mars – Juin 1894*, Vienna, 1895, pl. 21; public domain, cropped from <<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cf/Tresor-dahchour-sesostris3-3.jpg>> accessed 15 august 2020).

Considering both circumstances, the motifs on the maceheads of king Teti could recall the leonine character of the king by replicating the conventional patterns that served for depicting the lion's mane and/or tail.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, besides its “hairy” nature, these maceheads could reinforce their aggressiveness incorporating into the tuft/mane of the lion hard-tipped shapes that also recalled the paws of the statues of lions and sphinxes.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, there are attestations of Egyptian weapons decorated with other aggressive animals during the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE. According to Egyptian performative ideas, their shapes would reinforce and improve their offensive effectiveness. Such could be the case, for instance, of two early dynastic (or predynastic) maceheads that have the shape of a hippopotamus head<sup>38</sup>, or several similar predynastic examples with the shape of bulls<sup>39</sup>. Moreover, the royal mortuary

<sup>35</sup> Kl. KÖLLER, “Trägt der Louvre Sphinx A 23 einen Stierschweif?”, *GM* 160, 1997, p. 59-61; see also B. F[AY], B., “Cat. 69”, in Warmenbol (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 220-222 [69]. For a detailed description of the tail of the Louvre sphinx, see FAY, *The Louvre sphinx*, p. 22, pl. 38b-42. On the relation of lions and bulls in ancient Egypt, see C. DE WIT, *Le rôle et le sens du lion dans l'Égypte ancienne*, Leiden, 1951, p. 400-403.

<sup>36</sup> On the lion in ancient Egypt, see e.g. DE WIT, *op. cit.*; D. KLEINSGÜTL, *Die Feliden in Altägypten*, *Beitr.Äg* 14, Vienna, 1997, p. 29-63; D.J. OSBORN, H. OSBORNOVÁ, *The mammals of ancient Egypt*, Warminster, 1998, p. 113-119; P. VERNUS, J. YOYOTTE, *Bestiaire des pharaons*, Paris, 2005, p. 152-166.

<sup>37</sup> I owe this observation to F. Borrego (personal comm.). On the use of the paws for subduing the enemies, see the scenes in n. 32 and 45, and the passage of the *Pyramid Texts* mentioned below (PT 1212a-f); see also DE WIT, *op. cit.*, p. 25-26 for later examples.

<sup>38</sup> Oxford, Ashmolean Museum 1892.999, Brooklyn Museum L58.2.1; A. BEHRMANN, *Das Nilpferd in der Vorstellungswelt der Alten Ägypten I. Katalog*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe XXXVIII-Archäologie 22, Frankfurt, Bern, New York, Paris, 1989, Dok. 49 a/b; for the second example see W. NEEDLER, *Predynastic and archaic Egypt in the Brooklyn Museum*, New York, 1984, pp. 260-261 [148].

<sup>39</sup> Oxford, Ashmolean Museum E 134, Cairo JdE 38743, Berlin ÄM 15142; NEEDLER, *op. cit.*, p. 260-261 [148]; see also S. HENDRICKX, “Bovines in Egyptian predynastic and early dynastic iconography”, in F.A. Hassan (ed.), *Droughts, food, and culture: ecological change and food security in Africa's later prehistory*, New York, 2002, p. 275-318, esp. p. 285

complexes of Userkaf and Unis (5<sup>th</sup> dynasty) include depictions of the kings holding with the same hand a *ḥd*-mace and a long axe head (for a later example of this motif cf. fig. 2, a) decorated at its back with a falcon. Similarly, another relief in the complex of Pepy II (6<sup>th</sup> dynasty) includes a royal assistant that has a similar axe with a crocodile head at its back<sup>40</sup>.

In this regard, the following passage in the *Pyramid Texts* is a good example of the conferment of divine and animal features to a weapon:

May you receive for you that praised harpoon of yours, your *m3.t*-staff that seizes the river channels, whose points are the sun rays of Re, whose barbs are the claws of Mafdet, and I (the king) will cut with it the heads of the adversaries who are in the Field of Offerings (*šzp=k n=k m 'b3=k pw Hzw.ti m3.t i.ḥm 't itrw.w bwn=s ḥnb.w r' qs.w=s 'n.wt m3fd.t i.š'.n N tpy.w=s n im n.w d3ytyw imy.w sh.t htp*) (spell 519, PT 1212a-f<sup>PMN</sup>).

Even though there are no explicit hints that point to the identification of the hard-tipped leaf scale motives on maceheads as a lionine feature, this idea fit well with four other pieces of evidence that permit to contextualize such possibility within the Egyptian official ideology during the Old Kingdom.

First, the lion, alike the bull, formed part of the image of royal power, as it is evident in some spells of the *Pyramid Texts*:

He will seat on his *ḥndw*-throne of meteoric iron whose faces are wild lions, and its legs are the hooves of the great wild bull (*ḥms=f r=f ḥr ḥndw ip=f bi3 nti ḥr.w=f m m3-ḥz3 rd.w=f m '3g.wt-sm3 wr*) (spell 509, PT 1124a-c<sup>P</sup>)<sup>41</sup>.

Your face is (that of) a jackal, your tail is (that of) a wild lion. You will sit on that *ḥndw*-throne of yours and will govern the *akhs* (*ḥr=k m z3b ḥbz.t=k m m3i-ḥz ḥms=k ḥr ḥnd=k pw wd=k mdw n 3ḥ.w*) (spell 355, PT 573a-b<sup>TPMN</sup>).

Several sealings from 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty *Amtsiegel* support the identification of the king with the lion. A sealing from Abusir states: “Sahure, the royal lion, beloved of Wadjet and Hedjet-Nekhen(?) (*s3ḥw-r' m3i ny-sw.t mry w3dy.t ḥd.t-nḥn?*)”<sup>42</sup>, and two other impressions of Menkauhor from the same site probably refers to the king as such “royal lion” or “king-lion”

<sup>40</sup> A. LABROUSSE, J.-Ph. LAUER, *Les complexes funéraires d'Ouserkaf et de Néferhétepès. Texte*, BiEtud 130/1, Cairo, 2000, p. 119, n. 279. For the Userkaf and Teti examples, see *ibid.*, p. 119 [doc. 185]; *id.*, *Les complexes funéraires d'Ouserkaf et de Néferhétepès. Planches*, BiEtud 130/2, Cairo, 2000, p. 81, fig. 257a-b [doc. 185]; LAUER, LECLANT, *Le temple haut du complexe funéraire du roi Têti*, p. 93 [3], pl. 33 [B]; for the example of Pepy II, see JÉQUIER, *Le monument funéraire de Pepi II*, p. 37, pl. 47. For an interpretation of these objects as a single mace-axe weapon, see M. MEGAHED, “Union with god. A coronation scene (?) from the pyramid complex of Djedkare”, in P. János, H. Vymazalová (eds.), *The art of describing. The world of tomb decoration as visual culture of the Old Kingdom. Studies in honour of Yvonne Harpur*, Prague, 2018, p. 249-259, esp. p. 251-252, fig. 3. Megahed mentions Old and New Kingdom examples, for a Middle Kingdom image (Cairo CG 52003), see n. 33 and fig. 2a. For other examples of weapons with animal shapes, see BEHRMANN, *op. cit.*, Dok. 49 a.

<sup>41</sup> F.L. BORREGO GALLARDO, “Los tronos de *Bia* en los *Textos de las Pirámides* y las estatuas de Jafra”, *Isimu* 7, 2004, p. 277-312, esp., p. 279, 284. A similar text is spell 667 (PT 1939a), see *ibid.*, p. 279, n. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Current whereabouts unknown; P. KAPLONY, *Die Rollsiegel des Alten Reiches. II. Katalog der Rollsiegel*, MonAeg 3a-b, Brussels, 1981, p. 196-197, pl. 61 [*s3ḥw-r' 27*]. The text can be read alternatively as “beloved of the royal lion, Wadjet and Hedjet-Nekhen (?) (*mry m3i ny-sw.t w3dy.t ḥd.t-nḥn?*)”.

too<sup>43</sup>. Moreover, another sealing describes Renefer as “the victorious and fearful lion, beloved of Sobek (*mꜣi nḥt nr(w) mry sbk*)”<sup>44</sup>. In fact, the king was depicted as sphinx or lion in different occasions, as it is the case of the aforementioned relief in the Sahure mortuary complex<sup>45</sup>. Similar images also appear in some seals and sealings of the late 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Sometimes the Horus’ falcon on the *serekh* was substituted by a sphinx<sup>46</sup>. It is significant that in one instance the façade-like base of the *serekh* includes a smiting scene<sup>47</sup>. Similarly, another sealing from Abusir includes in the bases of two *serekhs* a squatting lion and a lion or sphinx that tramples an enemy respectively<sup>48</sup>.

The identification of the king with a lion or sphinx is much more explicit in later periods<sup>49</sup>. For instance, an 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty reference indicates that some royal weapons and tools were markers of the king’s presence as a powerful lion, as it is the case of the great ‘*wnt*-staff in the tale of *The taking of Joppa*<sup>50</sup>.

Second, in the same line of reasoning, the mane of the lions could identify this animal with the sun, as it is stated in Horapollon’s *Hieroglyphica*: which seems to be inspired on older ideas on this regard:

(...). For this animal has a large head. And it has fiery eyes, and its forehead is spherical, and its mane radiates from about it, in imitation of the sun (Horapollon, *Hieroglyphica* I 17)<sup>51</sup>.

The solar connotations of the lions and lionesses are well attested in ancient Egypt. It is the case, for instance, of the gods Aker and Ruty during the Old Kingdom<sup>52</sup>. However, a possible identification of the lion’s mane as the sun rays has been generally overlooked by

<sup>43</sup> M. VERNER, *Abusir III. The pyramid complex of Khentkaus*, Prague, 2001, p. 99, pl. 22 [279/A/98]; 112, pl. 24 [316/A/78-xm].

<sup>44</sup> Berlin ÄM 20382; KAPLONY, *op. cit.*, p. 284, pl. 81 [*r’-nfr-f* 3]. Again (cf. n. 42), there is another possible reading: “beloved of the victorious and crocodile-like fearful lion (*mry mꜣi nḥt nrw*). F. Borrego has pointed me that this sealing could be the same than another one discovered in the mortuary complex of this king, see M. VERNER, *Abusir IX. The pyramid complex of Raneferef – The archaeology*, Prague, 2006, p. 253 [189 = 1052w/I/84]. For another sealing with a (dubious) example of a lion, *ibid.*, 232 [102 = 824x/I/84].

<sup>45</sup> On this relief and other scenes, see n. 32 and L. BORCHARDT, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Ne-user-re*, Leipzig, 1907, p. 46-49, fig. 29, pl. 8-10.

<sup>46</sup> Cairo JE 72204; KAPLONY, *op. cit.*, pl. 89 [*dd-kꜣ-r’* 25]; VERNER, *Raneferef*, p. 209 [1 = 99b/I/82].

<sup>47</sup> Berlin ÄM 20386; KAPLONY, *op. cit.*, p. 327-328, pl. 88 [*dd-kꜣ-r’* 23].

<sup>48</sup> VERNER, *Khentkaus*, p. 100 [287/A/78].

<sup>49</sup> E.g., DE WIT, *Le rôle et le sens du lion*, p. 16-34, 39-56; see also S.-W. HSU, “Figurative expressions referring to animals in royal inscriptions of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty”, *JEH* 6, 2013, p. 1-18, esp. p. 5-9; *id.*, “Pharaos Körper: Tiere als bildliche Ausdrücke in der Königsinschriften”, *SAK* 43, 2014, p. 143-157; N. BEAUX, “Le lion et le belier Nebmaître roi et dieu à Soleb”, in N. Beaux, N. Grimal (eds.), *Soleb VI. Hommages à Michela Schiff Giorgini*, Cairo, 2013, p. 9-36, esp. p. 12, 36.

<sup>50</sup> Pap. Harris 500 vso. I, 8; H. GOEDICKE, “The capture of Joppa”, *CdE* 85, 1968, p. 219-233, esp. p. 219, 223-225 [i-j]. For the ‘*wnt*-staff, see *ibid.*, p. 224-225 [i]; C. MANASSA, “The chariot that plunders foreign lands: ‘The hymn to the king in his chariot’”, in A.J. Veldmeijer, S. Ikram (eds.), *Chasing chariots: proceedings of the first international chariot conference (Cairo 2012)*, Leiden, 2013, p. 143-156, esp. p. 148.

<sup>51</sup> English translation from G. BOAS, *The hieroglyphics of Horapollon*, New York, 1950, p. 70; see Fr. CREVATIN, G. TEDESCHI, *Horapollon l’Egiziano. Trattato sui Geroglifici*, Naples, 2002, p. 69 [17]; 99, n. 113, with references. On the reliability or plausibility of Horapollon’s ideas, see P. GERMANO LEAL, “Reassessing Horapollon: a contemporary view on *Hieroglyphica*”, *Emblematica* 21, 2014, p. 37-75.

<sup>52</sup> G. MEURER, *Die Feinde des Königs in den Pyramidentexten*, OBO 189, Freiburg, Göttingen 2002, p. 52-57 (Aker); 58-59 (Ruty); on the lion as a solar divinity, see, e. g., DE WIT, *op. cit.*, 138-147.



researchers<sup>53</sup>. Some pieces of evidence endorse that statement of Horapollon. According to Goebbs the stripes of the *nemes*-headdress, that is usually worn by the sphinxes, evoke the rays of the rising sun<sup>54</sup>. Instead the *nemes*, the mane displayed as a radiant circle in some aforementioned royal sphinxes during the late 12<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> dynasties probably had an analogous solar meaning. In this regard, Tefnin described the human-like face of two statues of Hatshepsut as maned sphinxes as follows:

*la forme générale du visage est un cercle parfait, accentué en régularité par l'anneau large de la collerette de crinière, dont la stylisation en flammes l'entoure comme d'un rayonnement*<sup>55</sup>.

Similarly, one wonders if the manes in the statues of the lioness goddess Sekhmet (see, e.g. the aforementioned Sekhmet statues of Amenhetep III) could evoke, along with their sun disks and *uraeus*, the power of the sun rays too. The goddess, among other deities, was considered Re's daughter and the Eye of the sun, being sometimes described as "the she-sun disk (*t3 itnt*)"<sup>56</sup>. Moreover, several rare depictions of the sun and its rays in the spells 64, 92 and 136b of the *Book of the Dead* in the papyrus of Neferwebenef (reign of Thutmose IV, 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty) recall strongly the shape and radial arrangement of the manes of the sphinxes and the statues of Sekhmet mentioned above<sup>57</sup>. Considering all these tenuous connections between the lions and sphinxes and the sun, Teti's "leonine" maceheads could be related to the normal *hd*-maces that, on the other hand, seem to have solar connotations mainly related to dawn too<sup>58</sup>.

Third, the formal similarities of the scenes of the king smiting foreigners and the sphinxes or griffins trampling down enemies mentioned above could be inspired by ancient Egyptian ethological observations. The maces could be identified with the lions' tails because the latter, when these felines are excited, recall the way the former were used in battle (up-down, left-right) [fig. 2, b], as it was already observed in the past<sup>59</sup>. They move their tails differently depending on their state. According to Liebenberg

<sup>53</sup> Cl. Douglas (ed.), *Visions. Notes of the seminar given in 1930-1934 by C.G. Jung*, BollSer 99, Princeton, 1997, p. 1038

<sup>54</sup> K. GOEBBS, "Untersuchungen zu Funktion und Symbolgehalt des *nms*", *ZÄS* 122, 1995, p. 154-181, esp. p. 166; *id.*, *Crowns in Egyptian funerary literature. Royalty, rebirth, and destruction*, Oxford, 2008, p. 30; 91; 368.

<sup>55</sup> TEFNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>56</sup> Sekhmet's solar connotations are clearly expressed from the Middle Kingdom: see an harpist song in the tomb of Senet at Thebes (TT 60), in N. DE G. DAVIES, *The tomb of Antefoker, vizier of Sesostri I (no. 60)*, TTS 2, London, 1920, p. 24-25, pl. 27; Fr. BORREGO GALLARDO, "Luz solar material: himnos y canciones a la diosa Hathor como oro entre el Reino Antiguo y el Reino Nuevo egipcios", in Fr. Borrego Gallardo, M. Herrero de Jáuregui (eds.), *Éter divino: Teopoética de la luz y el aire*, Madrid, 2018, p. 35-66, esp. p. 56-58, with references; for later examples, see J.-Cl. GOYON, *Le rituel du shpt shmt au changement de cycle annuel*, *BiEtud* 141, Cairo, 2006, *passim*. On Sekhmet as sun disk, see Ph. GERMOND, *Sekhmet et la protection du monde*, AH 9, Geneva, 1981, p. 34-35; and as solar radiance, see, e.g., GOYON, *op. cit.*, p. 28 [B 12]; 30, n. 9.

<sup>57</sup> Pap. Louvre N. 3092 [III 93]; <totenbuch.awk.nrw.de/objekt/tm134308> accessed 14 July 2020; see also H. KOCKELMANN, "Sunshine for the dead: on the role and representation of light in the vignette of Book of the Dead spell 154 and other funerary sources from pharaonic and Graeco-Roman Egypt", in R. Jasnow, Gh. Widmer (eds.), *Illuminating Osiris. Egyptological studies in honor of Mark Smith*, MVCAE 2, Atlanta GA, 2017, p. 181-196, esp., p. 182, fig. 1.

<sup>58</sup> J.R. PÉREZ ACCINO, "All'alba venceró: a violent metaphor at dawn", *TdE* 1, 2002, p. 91-102; C. GRAINDORGE, "L'oignon, la magie et les dieux", in S. Aufrère (ed.), *Encyclopédie religieuse de l'univers végétal: croyances phytoreligieuses de l'Égypte ancienne I*, OrMonsp 10, Montpellier, 1999, p. 317-333.

<sup>59</sup> PLINY, *Historia Naturalis* VIII 19, and, maybe, Homer, *Iliad* XX 165-171. Ancient Egyptians were sharp observers of the ethology and morphology of animals; see, e.g., an observation on the lion in D. BUDDE, "Zur Symbolik der sogennanten Schulterrosette bei Löwendarstellungen", *ZÄS* 127, 2000, p. 116-13; see also n. 62.

(...) if the lion's tail is twitching or jerking, but the ears are still cocked, it is probably just nervous or excited, but not angry. An angry lion flattens its ears, crouches low, and whisks its tail ever more rapidly from side to side, while uttering a nerve-racking series of coughing grunts or slurring growls. As its anger mounts, its tail is jerked stiffly up and down, and it initially comes at a trot before charging<sup>60</sup>.

In a similar way Rudani states:

(...) during agonistic behaviour: the adult male jerked up his tail immediately after charging a car on one occasion and a lioness on another. A lioness was seen jerking up her tail while crouching and snarling at a visitor stretching out his hand through a car window<sup>61</sup>.

Part of these movements, along with other ones such as the muzzle clamp of the lion, were observed and reflected on art by the Egyptians<sup>62</sup>.

Finally, if Teti's maceheads are "leonine" weapons, they could be related in some way to the circumstance that the lion also appears as a decorative motif in many Mesopotamian maceheads during the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE. In fact, it is the most depicted animal on these weapons by far, and vegetal elements are barely present in the maces discovered in this area<sup>63</sup>. Moreover, very similar Near Eastern examples of hard-tipped leaf scale motives appear on bronze maceheads from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE and on some later stone maces<sup>64</sup>. Even though it is not possible to know if there was a direct connection between the Egyptian and Mesopotamian weapons, the common use of similar objects with related decorative motives in both areas could be the result of long-distance cultural transmissions, especially in a moment in which connections between Egypt and the Levant were well established, mainly *via* Byblos<sup>65</sup>. It is possible that similar cultural values could spread out broadly. In this regard, the identification of lapis lazuli with the hair of gods and goddesses could be introduced into Egypt from the East through the commercial networks that permitted the entrance of the stone into the Nile valley, as its bluish colour is far from being similar to the colours and tones of

<sup>60</sup> L. LIEBENBERG, *A field guide to the animal tracks of southern Africa*. Cape Town, 1990, p. 54; see also G.B. SCHALLER, *The Serengeti lion: a study of predator-prey relations*, Chicago, 1972, p. 102-103.

<sup>61</sup> J.A. RUDNAI, *The social life of the lion. A study of the behaviour of wild lions (Panthera leo massaica [Newman]) in the Nairobi national park, Kenya*, Wallingford PA, 1973, p. 42.

<sup>62</sup> L. EVANS, *Animal behavior in Egyptian art*, *ACE-Stud* 9, Oxford, 2010, p. 111-113, pl. 8.

<sup>63</sup> For maceheads with lions, see B. MUHLE, *Vorderasiatische Keulen und ihr Umfeld vom 9. bis ins frühe 1. Jt. v. Chr. Typologie und Deutung*. PhD Thesis, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich, 2008, p. 57-59 [2.6.3. – Typ 1)c]; 63-64; 409-414. See also p. 482 [nos. 1775, 1777-1780]; for examples with vegetal motifs, see *ibid.*, p. 56-57 [2.6.2. – Typ 1)b)]; 409.

<sup>64</sup> For 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE bronze examples, see *ibid.*, p. 90-91 [6.2.5 – Typ 4.2.2)f1)]; 479-480; 95-96 [6.4.3 - Typ 4.4)f1)]; 485-488; for later examples, see *ibid.*, p. 73 [3.4.3 – Typ 2)f1)]; 452-453.

<sup>65</sup> K.N. SOWADA, *Egypt in the eastern Mediterranean during the Old Kingdom. An archaeological perspective*, *OBO* 237, Friburg, Göttingen, 2009, p. 128-141; 181-182; 218-222; M. MARCOLIN, A. DIEGO ESPINEL, "The sixth dynasty inscription of Iny: more pieces to the puzzle", in M. Bárta, F. Coppens, J. Krejčí (eds.), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2010*, Prague, 2011, p. 570-615. For the transmission of weapons in the ancient Near East, see G. GERNEZ, "Des armes et des hommes. La question des modèles de diffusion des armes au Proche-Orient à l'Âge de Bronze", in P. Rouillard, C. Perlès, E. Grimaud (eds.), *Mobilités – Immobilismes. L'emprunt et son refus, Colloques de la Maison René-Ginouvès* 3, Paris, 2007, p. 119-134; *id.*, "The exchange of products and concepts between the Near East and the Mediterranean: the example of weapons during the Early and Middle Bronze Ages", in K. Duistermaat, I. Regulski (eds.), *Intercultural contacts in the ancient Mediterranean. Proceedings of the international conference at the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, 25<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008*, *OLA* 202, Leuven, Paris, Walpole MA, 2011, p. 327-342, esp. p. 328-330.

human hair<sup>66</sup>. Moreover, both Egypt and the Levantine region could share common and/or coincidental cultural traits that favoured communication. In this regard, lions were considered in both areas as symbols of power and they were common, for example, in sealings on Southern and Northern Levantine pottery of the Early Bronze Age that was imported, in some instances, into Egypt<sup>67</sup>.

## Conclusion

Despite the absence of explicit connections between the leaf scale motifs on Teti's maceheads and the lions, the aforementioned pieces of evidence permit to offer a more feasible interpretation of these weapons than their previous identification as vegetal motifs. Just like the bovine tail and beard as royal symbols, the lionine nature of these maces is not clearly mentioned in the texts and its origin and meaning are omitted from the royal and religious texts, but contrarily to the bull-related *regalia* these weapons left a lesser mark on the official iconography, being only depicted sporadically.

---

<sup>66</sup> A similar long distance transmission, but in the opposite direction, could be the diffusion of Near and Middle Eastern maceheads types to Western China, see L. SHUICHENG, "The mace-head: a significant evidence of the early cultural interaction between West and East", *Social evolution & History* 17/2, 2018, p. 258-272; on problems regarding this statement see G. SHELACH, *Prehistoric societies on the northern frontiers of China: archaeological perspectives on identity formation and economic change during the First Millennium BCE*, London, New York, 2009, p. 124. Copper and bronze metallurgy seem to have followed the same eastward direction from an unknown origin, see J. MEI, Y. YU, K. CHEN, L. WANG, "The appropriation of Early Bronze technology in China", in Ph. Stockhammer, J. Maran (eds.), *Appropriating innovations – Entangled knowledge in Eurasia, 5000 – 1500 BCE*, Oxford, 2017, p. 231-240. Such transmissions, however, have to be considered with caution. On this regard, see, e.g., V. ALMANSA-VILLATORO, "The cultural indexicality of the N41 sign for *bj3*: the metal of the sky and the sky of metal", *JEA* 105/1, 2019, p. 73-81. For other possible examples of early long distance trade and cultural exchanges, see, e.g., J. C. MORENO GARCÍA, "Trade and power in ancient Egypt: Middle Egypt in the late third/early second millennium BC", *JAR* 25/2, 2017, p. 87-132.

<sup>67</sup> For the lions on the sealings, see A. M. MAEIR, I. SHAI, L. KOLSKA HORWITZ, "'Like a lion in cover': a cylinder seal from Early Bronze Age III Tell eš-Šafi/Gath, Israel", *IEJ* 61, 2011, p. 12-31, esp. p. 21-24; on the pottery with this kind of sealings discovered in Egypt, see V. TUMOLO, "The Levantine seal-impressed jar from the tomb G 2370 B at Giza revisited", in A. Vacca, S. Pizzimenti, M.G. Micale (eds.), *A oriente del Delta. Scritti sull'Egitto ed il Vicino Oriente in onore di Gabriella Scandone Matthiae*, CMAO 18, Rome, 2018, p. 611-632, esp. p. 617-619. On the lion in northern Levant, see L. PEYRONEL, "Il ruggito del leone. Qualche osservazione sulle immagini ferine nel mondo siriano del III millennio a.C." in S. Valentini, G. Guarducci (eds.), *Between Syria and the highlands – Studies in honor of Giorgio Buccellati & Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati*, *Studies on the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean* 3, Rome, 2019, p. 323-334.