



## The False Door Panel of *Tnti* and his Wife *Mr.s-ḥnh* from Giza

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to publish the false door panel of an official called Tjenti and his wife, Mers-ankh. It was found by Selim Hassan in association with Cairo University during the excavation at the Giza Necropolis. It is currently kept at the Museum of the Faculty of Archeology - Cairo University, under the number 1674- 51. Tjenti and his wife, Mers-ankh are shown sitting on one chair behind an offering table laden with different types of loaves of bread. Tjenti wears a kilt with a short wig, a false beard. He is extending his right hand towards the offering table in front of him, while his left arm is held across his chest, holding the khrep scepter, his wife wears a long wig, and a long tight-fitting dress. She embraces her husband with her two arms, only one line of hieroglyphic text is written above the scene.

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scepter -The inspector of the craftsmen.

### INTRODUCTION

The Giza Necropolis is one of the most famous landmarks. It was the focus of excavations from the medieval period to modern scientific archaeology of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. More recent excavations were carried out in Giza. (Faulkner 1946,105-106; Manuelian 1999 ,138–153; Manuelian 2008,29-57; Markowitz 2002, 33-45)

During the excavations carried out by Selim Hassan in association with Cairo University in the seasons 1930-1931, more than nineteen inscribed tombs were brought to light. One of these tombs was the rock-cut mastaba of Nisw-ked, the Scribe of the crew of the Four Artisan's Division. His mastaba (G 8950) lies to the northwest of Kausert (G 8934) and the south of Nefretnisut (G 8957). (Hassan 1936, 96-103, figs. 101-111, pls. 29-32).

Inside his mastaba are three inscribed slabs of white Tura limestone. Which have undoubtedly fallen from the false door. One of these slabs is the limestone panel of a false door of Tjenti and his wife Mers-ankh. They were found into the debris of the chapel. (Hassan, 1936, .96. Fig. 105, H. XXXI,1).

### METHODOLOGY:

#### *DESCRIPTION: (pl.1-3, fig.1)*

The panel under study is a rectangular example of unpainted limestone. (Tawfik 2015,11(2),136-151). It measures 38.5cm high, 56.5 cm wide, and 20 cm thick. The craftsmanship of this panel

is excellent, and the surface was carefully prepared. The preservation is very good, however, parts of the corners are damaged.

The surface was carefully prepared. It shows a man and his wife in raised relief with a line of hieroglyphic text cut in fine, sharp sunk relief above the owner of the stela. (Strudwick 1985, 24). The panel is currently located in the Museum of the Faculty of Archeology-Cairo University, under the number 1674- 51.

### The Scene:

On the panel, Tjenti and his wife Mers-ankh are shown sitting together on one chair with bull legs behind an offering table. (Gardiner 1957,501; *Wb* III, 183; Kanawati 1999, pl. 3.a.,30; Helck 1986,147; Bolshakov 2001, 572-574; Worsham 1979,7-8). Tjenti wears a kilt, (Cartland 1916,166, figs.2-5) a short wig where the hair is neatly arranged into small squares in an overlapping pattern, a false beard, a necklace, a bracelet on both wrist, and a collar. (Brovarski. 1997,137-162; Kanawati 2003, 65; Alexanian 2006,1-8). He is extending his right hand towards the offering table in front of him while his left arm is held across his chest, holding the kherep sceptre.

Mers-ankh wears a long wig with a lappet on the chest, leaving the ear exposed (Fischer 1962,7-18; Fischer 1959,239 note 16; Brovarski 1984b,p.186 note 89) , a broad collar, a bracelet on her right wrist, and a long tight-fitting dress. She embraces her husband with her two arms. There are eleven bread loaves (Van Voss 1984,805–807; Worsham,7–10; Anderson 2000,129-140) in different shapes on the offering table: Half-loaves, round, and triangular (Kahlbacher 2013,7-20). Above the bread lies the heads of two ducks as an abbreviation of fowl offerings, an ox head, a bull leg "hps", two pieces of meat are set on a basketry tray with a central leg and two sealed beer jars on pot stands. Above the offering table is set of a nested ewer and basin (Gardiner 1957,528[W10a];528 [W5]), which combine to represent the act of washing. As washing the hands before meals was a habit among the Ancient Egyptians (Saad, 1957,52), a nested ewer and basin on a low table were regularly featured in Old Kingdom table scenes on tomb walls and false door panels. However, they are rarely set on a ground line as in this panel (Davies 1902, pl. 28; Harpur 1987, 280).



Fig.1. Facsimile of False Door's Panel of *Tjenti* and his wife *Mers-ankh*

**Text:**

A line of hieroglyphic text above the scene reads:

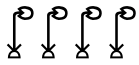
**Transliteration:**

*Rh-nswtshdḥmwt(yw) Tntiḥmt.fMr.s-ʿnh*

**Translation:**

“The king's acquaintance, The Inspector of craftsmen Tjenti, and his wife, Mers- ankh.”

Under the offering table, there is an ideographic offering list oriented from right to left with an inscribed *h3* formula (Strudwick 1985,21), which reads:



*h3mnḥth3 šs h3ḥnkḥth3t3*

“A thousand of pieces of cloth, a thousand alabaster jars, a thousand jars of beer, a thousand loaves of bread.”

**DISCUSSION:****- The importance and significance of false doors and their panels in Ancient Egypt**

The false door is one of the most distinctive elements of ancient Egyptian tombs, in general, particularly in the Old Kingdom tombs (Baines 1995,140; Anderson 2000,129; Haeny 1984,568, Abb3; Englund 1999,101-108; Wiebach 1981,45-51; Arnold 1994,227; Arnold 2003,89; Moussa 1971,32). It may have developed out of the slab stela in the Early Dynastic Period (Wiebach-Koepke 2001,498-501; Reisner 1932, 324; Bolshakov 1997,113, 115, 120,139; Dawood 2005,117; Kanawati 2005, 57-58; Hölzl 2001,319-320; Der Manuelian 2003,138, 227-232, figs.263-294; Anderson 2000,129). Then, it became common for private tombs rather than the stela during the Old Kingdom (Reisner 1932, 328).

Symbolically, ancient Egyptians believed that death was not the end of life, as it is continued in the tomb (Allen 2006,10). This is achieved with the placement of items such as false doors, offering tables, and basins which were always prepared for performing funerary practices (Shirai 2006, 326; Shoukry 1958,292-297).

The false door in an ancient Egyptian tomb had a cultic function and a role for the deceased (Müller 1933,165-206; Junker 1934,4-19; Fischer 1968,57-65). It connected the world of the living to the world (Baines & Malek 1980,62; Baines 1991, 123-200; Bommas 2010,159-182). Through this door, the tomb owner could take part and enjoy the offerings to sustain their Ka (Kanawati 2001, 58-59; Arnold 2002,89-90; Assmann 2002,323; Hays 2004,175–200; Hays 2011,115–130) , and secure their eternal life(Trastoy 2018,153-54).

Most of the false doors contained an offering formula accompanied by the deceased's name, titles, epithets, and the deceased's figures on the panel(Wiebach 1981,232-233; Strudwick 1984,42). In general, other family members' names and titles were also inscribed repeatedly on the false doors. It is assumed that only important family members were allowed to place theirs on false doors(Baines & Lacovara 2002,5-36; Brovarski 2009,361).

In the early Old Kingdom, the false door panel (Rusch 1923,101-124; Reisner 1942,330-346, 372-379; Badawy 1949, 213-243; Hassan 1944,65-180; Fischer 1996, 91-102; Trastoy 2018,160) was often used to depict the tomb owners' offering table scene (Kanawati 1987b,142; Kamrin, 1999,41-42; Strudwick 1985,9-27; Brovarski 2009,359- 425). Occasionally, his wife or his family was represented with him (Mc Corquodale 2000,3). When the wife shares her husband's tomb as a secondary partner, her secondary status appeared on the false door panel. In contrast, if the couple was seated together on a single chair before the offering table, she often sat on the subordinate right side of the offering table, while her husband took the dominant left side opposite to her (Fischer 1984,187,190, fig. 3; *LD* II, pl. 23; 40; III, fig. 27; Hassan 1941, fig. 15; Petrie 1892, pls. 13, 15; Brovarski 2006,71-118).

In some instances, texts inscribed on false doors relate that they were gifts of the king (Chauvet, 2004,475; Takenoshita, 2011,67). Accordingly, through their size, technique, inscriptions, decorations, and style (Frood 2010,469-490; Baines & Yoffee 1998,199-260; Bolshakov 1994,9-33; Quirke 1992,141-143, 152-153; Van Walsem 2005,21; Takenoshita 2011,337), false doors indicated the social status of their owners in the community (Roth, 2001,563-580; Olsen 2003,87-104; Baines & Lacovara 2002,5-36; Posener-Kriéger 1980,154; Roth 1995,50), the status which the deceased is keen to show in his life, and he wants to be maintained in the afterlife (Trastoy 2018 ,326).

The false door is one of the regularly surviving parts of tombs. Thus, both the door and its owner are used in dating (Strudwick 1985,9-10). Numerous studies attempted to trace the stylistic development of false doors to aid in the dating of monuments (Rusch 1923, 101-124; Müller 1933,165-206 ; Reisner 1942,7-8).

#### ***-The name, titles, and epithets of Tjenti:***

The earthly life and afterlife of the deceased are implied by the presence of his name numerous times on the false door as well as on various parts of the tomb. The recurrence of the name was a practical way of retaining the deceased's name to protect his presence in this life and the afterlife. (Abd el-Sattar & Boraik & Fayez 2015,321-32). In addition, the name determined an owner's identity and represented the culture, time, values, social, political loyalties (Verus, 1982,334-338), and society to which they belonged (Vernus 1982,326-334; Helling 2015,235-224; Hutto 2002,213-233).

The name Tjenti was common during the Old Kingdom. It is attested several times on the Giza plateau. (*P.N.*,I,392,10;*PM*, III<sup>2</sup>,57; Kent, 1994,12; Weeks 1994,12;*PM* III,56;*Urk*,I,63-5;*PM*,III,212;*PM*,III,295; *PM*, III<sup>2</sup>,482). There were several individuals with the name Tjenti in the Giza necropolis, especially from the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, such as Tjenti the Scribe (Sethe 1911, Taf. V, 135-50; Goedicke 1970,149-73, Taf. XVI; *Urk*.I,157-8;*PM*, III, 20).

Tjenti, the Director of the Palace, Secretary of the Toilet-House, etc. (*PM*, III, 141); Tjenti, Director of the Dining Hall of the Great House, Overseer of the Ka-Servants (*PM*, III, 210; Smith, 1949,189); Tjenti the Overseer of the Chamber of the waabt, Inspector of Craftsmen etc. in the Sixth Dynasty (Moret 1914,541; *Urk* I,1,63-5; Goedicke 1970,122-30, Taf. XIII); Tjenti, the secretary of the king's waabt, overseer of the *gs-pr* of the Necropolis (*LD*,I,95; Reisner 1942; Mariatte 1889 ,538;*PM*,III,212; *LG* 77). The name is continued in the mid-Sixth Dynasty or later, such as Tjenti the Prophet of Khufu and Khnum in all his places, Overseer of the Expedition, etc; Tjenti, the Chief Justice, and Vizier (Mariatte 1889,148-9; *PM*, III<sup>2</sup>,482). Besides, a lot of artifacts mentioned this name. For example, a slab stela in The Art Institute under number 20.265 of a scribe named Tjenti and his son also named Tjenti (Eaton-Krauss 2008,19-22). An offering table of an official called Tjenti dated to the Fifth or Sixth Dynasty is kept in Boston Mus.13.3282-3 (*PM*, III, 56). An entrance doorway Drum of Tjenti the Overseer of commissions, Director of the two Canals, etc ( *PM*, III, 116). The Tablet of

Tjenti, the Royal Document Scribe from the Fourth Dynasty (JE 72135) (Eldamaty & Trad 2002, 777-90). Tjenti's wife is called Mers-ankh (PN, I, 158, 6). This name is mentioned several times in the Old Kingdom (Mariatte 1960, 59). It is noted that she did not hold any titles or epithets.

-Tjenti had two titles:

### 1- *Rh-nswt*

*Rhnswt* (Wb II, 446, 9-15; FCD, 152) was a rank title. (Jones 2000, 105) It was one of the most popular titles in the Old Kingdom, and it was used throughout Egyptian history. (Firth & Gunn 1926, 157, Nr.1; Helck 1954, 26-28; Fischer 1968, 170-171; Fischer 1976, 8, nr.15).

There are many opinions about the interpretation of this title. It may be translated as:

- "The king's property custodian" (Jones 2000, 327-328, n° 1206; Baud, 1999, 107-113; Grajetzki, 241-243; Fischer, 2000, 30; 71, n° 176; 72 (176); Bárta 1999, 79-89).

- "The one who is concerned with the king's affairs" (Jones 2000, 327-328, n° 1206; Abu Bakr 1953, 47).

- "The one associated with the royal cult". (Friedman 2015, 43-44).

However, the most likely, acceptable, and common translation is that this title literally means "royal acquaintance" (Baud 1999, 107-109; Kanawati 1977, 105, 115, 23; PM III<sup>2</sup>I: 76; PM III<sup>2</sup>I: 69; Helck, 1954, 28; Helck 1986, 596-601), while all the previous opinions refer to the tasks entrusted to the one who held this title. Although it was a rank title, it sometimes indicates a religious function related to the god Osiris, especially among other religious titles. (Wb, II, 446, 11; Coulon 2006, 50; De Meulenaere 1976, 138). Besides, it is noted that a woman of some status held the female form of the title *rhtnswt* "known to the king". (Fischer 2000, 79; Berlev 1974, 109).

### 2- *shdhmwt(yw)*.

He held the high-ranking title *shdhmwt(yw)* (Wb, III, 85, 15; Jones 2000, no.680; Ward 1982, no.282a; Taylor 2001, 37), the Inspector of the Craftsmen. It was widespread in the Old Kingdom. It may be associated with the cult of the craftsmen's patron god, Ptah. (Wilson 2014, 57-8; Pyr, 98, n.6).

### -The *khersceptre*

From the earliest times, officials of important rank were often portrayed holding the sceptre in the course of performing their duties. This indicates their high status. (Baligh 2008, 170-172; Harpur 1987, 126-127). The owner carrying the staff and the sceptre was known probably as early as the Third Dynasty and became common during the Old Kingdom (El-Masry 2003, 272; Harpur 1987, 128-129), the Middle Kingdom, and later (Pflüger 1947, 130; Aman 2017, 181-187, figs.1-2). During the Old and Middle Kingdoms, the high officials were traditionally shown holding the kherscepter either alone or together with other objects, standing or seated in front of offering tables (Swinton 2003, 14:95-109; Woods 2015, 219-248; Mahran 2020, 1-31). It is a symbol of authority and is often incorporated in names and words associated with power and control. The *hrp*-scepter is related to the *sekhem*-scepter and the *aba*-scepter. (*ḥb3*, *sh̄m*, *hrp*) scepters of authority have the same shape but in titles is possibly always to be read *hrp*, sceptre of authority, it is impossible to distinguish separate forms for the various uses. The word *ḥb3* was used in the pyramid texts and object friezes of the Middle Kingdom to designate this type of scepters, while the words *sh̄m* and *hrp* were used during the New Kingdom and after (Graham 2001, 163-167; Thompson 1992, 3, 77-83).

### **- "h3" formula**

The "h3" formula depends on using the number "h3," which refers to the abundance of the offerings dedicated to the deceased. This offering formula consists of a thousand of bread, a thousand of beer, a thousand of oxen, a thousand of fowl, a thousand of ointment-jars, and a thousand of clothing" (Assmann 2005,96-102; Nicola 2013,13-15; Clark 1959,231-234). The lector priests carried out that role of reading, but by the end of Pepy I's reign, the visitors of the tomb read it to the spirit of the deceased. (Sainte Fare Garnot 1938,93).

### **-Dating**

As for the dating, this panel had some features, which frequently appear on the second style false doors from the late Old Kingdom (Rusch 1923,101-124; Hassan 1944,124-180; Wiebach 1981, 8-10, 128-141; Strudwick 1984,35-49; Id.,1985,9-52; Brovarski 2009,359-423).

- The design and style of the rectangular panel, its decoration, the typology of the panel, and its small size are indicative of a later date in the Old Kingdom from the mid-Sixth Dynasty onwards, particularly during the reign of Pepy II (Bolshakov 1985,10-17, 36).
- The type of nested ewer and basin and the absence of the jar rack, including the ewer's spout being shown towards the deceased's face, mostly date to the later part of the Sixth Dynasty (Fischer 1977,63-65).
- Depicting a seated figure of the deceased at an offering table of bread alone was common on the panels of the false doors of the late Old Kingdom ( Brovarski 2006,114-118)
- The pattern of overlapping locks wig was a common style during the Sixth Dynasty (Fischer 1962,65, pl.17, figs.1-2; Tassie 2008,207; Cherpion 1989, 57-58, fig.35; Brovarski 2008,54-56, 83-84; Russmann 1995, 269-279).
- The bull-legged chair indicates a date range running up to the reign of Pepi I and probably extending to the reign of Merenre (Cherpion 1989,34, fig. 15, tableau 155; Baud 1998,7-14).

In conclusion, the panel size, style, inscription, and execution of relief carvings are typical of the false doors' panels produced for middle-class officials of the late Sixth Dynasty.

### **CONCLUSION:**

This paper aims to publish the false door panel of Tjenti and his wife, Mers-ankh. It was found by Selim Hassan in association with Cairo University during the excavation at the Giza Necropolis. It is currently kept at the Museum of the Faculty of Archeology, Cairo University. Tjenti and his wife Mers-ankh are shown sitting on one chair with bulls' legs behind an offering table. Tjenti wears a kilt, a pattern of overlapping locks short wig in which the hair is neatly arranged into small squares, a false beard, a necklace, a bracelet on both wrists, and a collar. He is extending his right hand towards the offering table in front of him while his left arm is held across his chest, holding the kherepsceptre. Mers-ankh wears a long wig with a lappet on the chest, leaving the ear exposed, a broad collar, a bracelet on her right wrist, and a long tight-fitting dress. She embraces her husband with her two arms. There are eleven bread loaves in different shapes on the offering table: Half-loaves, round, and triangular. Above the bread lies two heads of ducks as an abbreviation of fowl offerings, an ox head, a bull leg "hps", two pieces of meat on a basketry tray with foot and two sealed beer jars on pot stands. Above the offering table, a nested ewer and a basin are set. Tjenti had two titles:

- 1- *Rh-nswt* “The King's Acquaintance”.
- 2- *shdhmwt(yw)* “The Inspector of Craftsmen”.

The panel could be dated to the late Old Kingdom as it had some features, including the article, which frequently appeared on the second style of the false doors dated to the late Old Kingdom.

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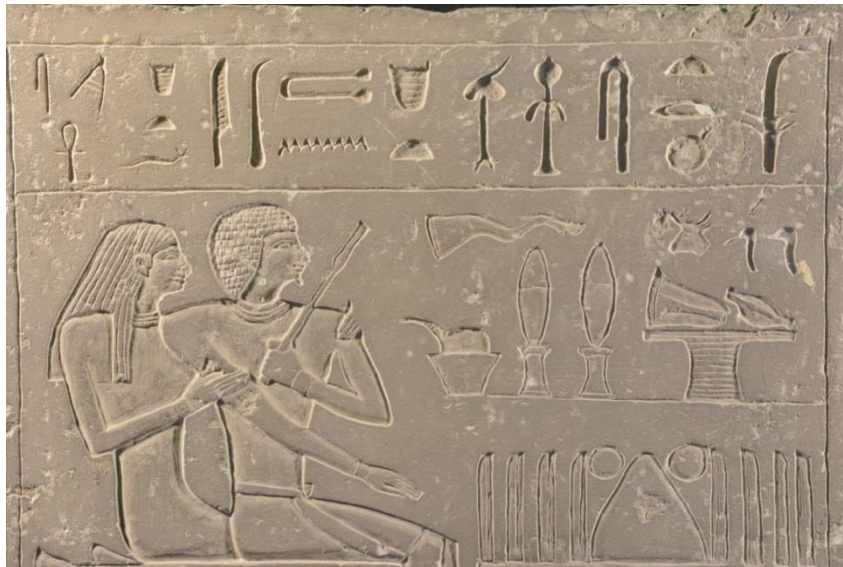
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**FIGURES:**



Pl (1). The panel of *Tnti* and his wife *Mr.s-nh*



Pl (2). The upper part of the panel of *Tnti* and his wife *Mr.s-nh*



Pl (3). The lower part of the panel of *Tnti* and his wife *Mr.s-nḥ*

## باب الوهمى للمدعو ثنتى وزوجته مرسنخ من الجيزة

### المخلص

يتعلق موضوع البحث بنشر لوحة الباب الوهمى للمدعو ثنتى وزوجته مرسنخ ، اللوحة عثر عليها سليم حسن أثناء حفائره فى الجيزة ، وهى محفوظة حالياً بمتحف كلية الآثار - جامعة القاهرة ، تحت رقم ١٦٧٤ - ٥١ . تصور اللوحة ثنتى وزوجته مرسنخ جالسين على مقعد واحد امام مائدة قرابين محملة بأنواع مختلفة من الخبز ، وفوقها مجموعة من القرابين . يظهر ثنتى مرتدياً نقبة قصيرة وباروكة شعر قصيرة وذقن مستعار ، يده اليسرى مضمومة على صدره ممسكا بها صولجان الخرب ، فى حين تمتد يده اليمنى إلى مائدة القرابين ، وتظهر مرسنخ محتضنة زوجها بذراعيها وقد ارتدت رداء حابك وباروكة شعر طويلة تنسدل على كتفها . أعلى اللوحة ، يوجد نص هيروغلىفى أفقى واحد ، يسجل اسم ثنتى وألقابه واسم زوجته مرسنخ .

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متاح على الإنترنت فى ٤ فبراير ٢٠٢٥

### الكلمات الدالة

جبانة الجيزة - باب وهمى -  
ثنتى - مرسنخ - قرابين -  
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