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The Pyramid Builders
The Tomb of Tntj, Overseer of the Linen
(G.S.E 2011)

The tomb of *Tntj* (G.S.E 2011) was found in the upper cemetery of the tombs of the pyramid builders to the south east of the Wall of the Crow (Fig. 1).

The tombs of the pyramid builders stand as one of the most important Old Kingdom sites. It contains the lower cemetery of the workmen, who were involved in the construction of the pyramids. These tombs were built of mudbrick and of different shapes, such as domed ceiling, mastaba, shafts and bee-hive. The tombs were equipped with few artifacts to be used in the afterlife, except for a pottery vessel on the hand of the deceased.

The study of the pottery shows that the cemetery started in the Fourth Dynasty until the Fifth Dynasty. Also, the bone analysis proved that many workmen had accidents that caused injuries such as broken hands and legs, and also all of them showed stress on their backs.¹

The upper cemetery consists of the tombs built of mudbrick and limestone on a much larger scale. The titles found in this cemetery are Overseer of Craftsmen, Overseer of Draftsmen, Overseer of the side of the pyramid, Overseer of the Workmen who drag the stones and others. One woman had a title connected with weaving. The tomb of *Tntj* is part of this cemetery and his title indicates its owner was somehow connected with linen.²

A new cemetery was found to the north of this cemetery, facing the great pyramid. The cemetery contains large tombs connected with small ones. The shafts contained a skeleton with beer jars. This cemetery can show that the builders of the pyramids were divided into gangs and each gang had an overseer. The study of the tombs and pottery date this cemetery to the Fourth Dynasty.³

Another distinct cemetery was found to the south of the workmen tombs. This is constituted of a group of fourteen tombs surrounded by a limestone wall. The tombs were reserved for a class of officials with priestly titles and are not connected with the workmen.⁴ M. Lehner found the workmen's instillation area to the east of our cemetery. In it he found workmen's quarters and facilities for bread making and sorting salted fish. This is an important discovery that tells us about the life of the workmen who were in charge of the construction of the pyramids. The wall, known as Heit el-Ghorab was built to separate the workmen's quarters from the royal construction site. Also, we can say that the

* This article is written on the occasion of the *Hb-Sd* of Karol Myśliwiec. Karol is a great scholar and a good friend of mine. I hold him in the highest respect and always enjoy meeting him. He has been working on the west of the Step Pyramid, near my excavation at Gisir el-Mudir. I used to visit his work. I do admire the tombs that he discovered, the conservation and his great useful publication.

Karol helped recently many young Egyptian Egyptologists to study in Poland and learn from his scholarship. These are my students, who worked with me for a long time. It is to Karol Myśliwiec that I dedicate this article.

¹ Z. HAWASS, *The Workmen Community at Giza*, [in:] M. Bietak (Ed.), *Haus und Palast in Alten Ägypten*, Internationales Symposium, 8–11 April 1992 in Kairo, Wien 1996, pp. 53–67.

² Compare other tombs in: Z. HAWASS, *The Pyramid Builders: A Group of Unique Statues Discovered at Giza IV: The Statue of the Overseer of Craftsmen and his Wife*, [in:] *L'art de l'Ancient Empire égyptien*. Actes du colloque organisé au musée du Louvre par le Service culturel les 3 et 4 avril 1998, Paris 1999, pp. 79–98.

³ See Z. HAWASS, *Mountains of the Pharaohs: the Untold Story of the Pyramid Builders*, New York-London 2006, pp. 157–167.

⁴ See Z. HAWASS, A. OKASHA, *A New Cemetery to the South of the Tombs of the Pyramid Builders*, *ASAE*, in print.



1. General view of the tomb of *Tntj* (G.S.E 2011) in the upper workmen cemetery at Giza (Photo credit: Zahi Hawass Photo Archive).

workmen who built the pyramid numbered about 10,000. The workmen who died during the construction of pyramid were buried in the lower cemetery.⁵

THE SITE

The tomb of *Tntj* (G.S.E 2011) is located directly south of tomb No G.S.E 2007. The north side of the *Tntj* tomb is built against the south wall of the tomb G.S.E 2007. Tomb No G.S.E 2004 in its turn is built against the south wall of G.S.E 2011 (**Figs 2–3**).

DESCRIPTION OF THE ARCHITECTURE

The tomb G.S.E 2011 contains the following architectural components and funerary equipment:

1. The entrance.
2. The open court.
3. The tomb façade.
4. The mastaba.

⁵ M. LEHNER, *The Complete Pyramids*, London 1997, pp. 230–235; see also Z. HAWASS, *Tombs of the Pyramid Builders*, *Archaeology* 50/1, 1997, pp. 39–43; Id., *Newly Discovered Statues from Giza 1990–2009*, Cairo 2010.

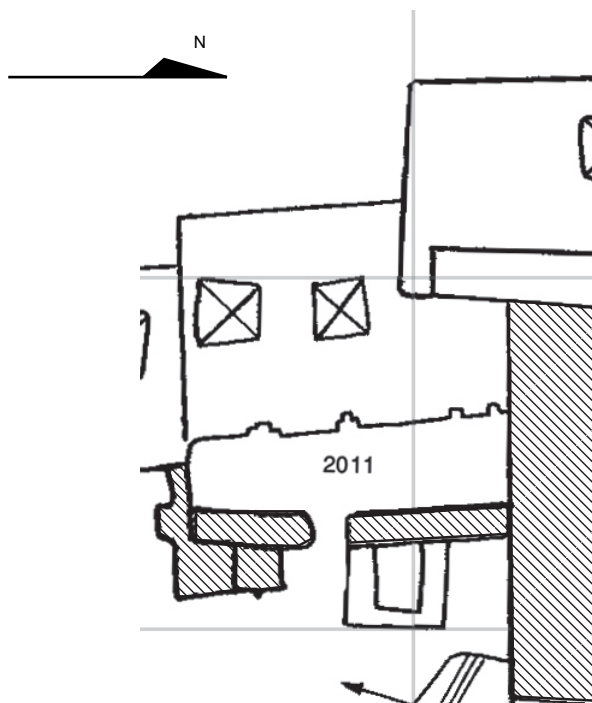
G.S.E.2009-2010
 Top Plan of south of Petiti Tomb



- Mud-Bricks
- Mother-Rock
- White Limestone
- Sand
- Local Limestone
- Taffa
- Shaft



2. The upper cemetery of the tomb builders at Giza with the tomb of *Imhotep* to the upper left side (Drawing by courtesy of the Author).



3. Plan of the tomb of *Tntj* and its surroundings
(Drawing by courtesy of the Author).



4. General view of the tomb entrance and the open court (Photo credit: Zahi Hawass Photo Archive).



5. View of the tomb façade with two false door of the stone mastaba and two niches of the additional mastaba (Photo credit: Zahi Hawass Photo Archive).



6. The false doors of the stone mastaba of *Tnj* (Photo credit: Zahi Hawass Photo Archive).

5. The burial shafts.
6. Additional burials.
7. The pottery from the burial.
8. The artifacts.

Dimensions of the tomb are: L. (from east to west) 6.10m; W. (from north to south) 4.75m.

The eastern walls of the front hall were built of mudbrick cased with tafla and a layer of limestone plaster. The façade that contains the false doors was built of local limestone. The mastaba that houses the shafts was built of mudbrick, tafla and chunks of limestone.

The Entrance is located on the middle of the eastern wall. On the north side its width is 50cm and its height is 95cm. On the south side its height is 1.5m and its width 45cm (**Fig. 4**).

The Open Court. The entrance of the tomb leads to the front hall which is located on the east side of the tomb facade. The owner of the tomb used a part from the south wall of tomb (G.S.E 2007) as the northern side of this court and also used the northern wall of tomb (G.S.E 2004) as a south wall. Therefore, the owner of the tomb built only the eastern wall, which contains the tomb entrance. This wall is 4.50m long and 40–50cm thick. The maximum height is 1.50m (**Figs 1 and 3 and 4**).

The Tomb Façade is built of local limestone blocks. Most of the blocks were rectangular and were cased with white mortar (**Figs 4–6**).

This façade is rectangular in shape. Its maximum length is 4.55m from north to south. The preserved height is 1.20m on the south and 1.60m on the north. It is 1.15m thick. The façade contains two limestone false doors (**Fig. 6**).

The First Northern False Door

This element is located about 95cm from the beginning of the north wall of the tomb (**Fig. 6**). It is raised from the floor of the front wall by 20cm. It is also located 1m to the north of the second south false door.

The false door has all the components of Old Kingdom simple false doors, especially the panel that topped the door. But it is uninscribed. H. 115cm; W. 32cm.

The offering basin at the foot of this false door measures 28cm in length and 22cm in width.

The Second South False Door

It is located 1m to the south of the first false door and raised by 22cm from the floor of the front hall (**Fig. 6**). This door too is built from local limestone. The upper part of the door is lost and the remainder has no inscription. It is 95cm in height and 60cm in width. In front of this false door was found a limestone offering basin. The second false door height is 25cm and its thickness is 22cm.

The Burial Shafts

The Northern Burial Shaft is located at a distance of 1.25m behind the first northern false door on the tomb façade. It is also located about 90cm to the south of the northern wall of the mastaba and about 1.17m to the east of the western wall of the mastaba. It is situated about 65cm to the north of the southern shaft.

The upper part of the shaft was built of mudbrick, tafla and chunks of local limestone. The dimensions of the upper part of the shaft are 95cm from north to south and 85cm from east to west. The debris that was removed from the top of the shaft consisted sand, tafla and chunks of local limestone. It is about 1.30m deep, while the lower part was cut in the rock some 1.75m. The depth as a whole is thus 3.5m. About 2.15m down we found the entrance to the burial chamber, which measures 90cm in height and 82cm from the north to the south. It leads directly to the burial chamber on the west side. We found that it was robbed at a later period because the entrance was open and the stones that closed it were discarded.

The burial chamber is rectangular in shape. It measures 1.20m from north to south and 82cm from east to west and has a maximum height 85cm. We found inside a skeleton in a fetal position with the face directed to the east.

The Southern Burial Shaft is located behind the southern false door. The distance between the southern burial shaft and the southern false door is 1.20m and 65cm from the northern burial shaft. The upper part of the shaft is built of mudbrick, tafla and chunks of local limestone. The dimensions of the upper part: L. 96cm (from north to south); W. 94cm (from east to west); D. 110cm.

The lower part of the shaft is cut in the rock to a depth of 2.35m. The maximum depth of the shaft as a whole is 3.35m. On the west side of the shaft at a depth of about 2.60m was found the entrance of the burial chamber. The width of this entrance from north to south is 80cm and it is 85cm in height. The burial chamber itself is rectangular with a length of 1.50m from north to south, a width of 82cm from east to west and a height of 80cm. On the south side of the burial chamber we found the skeleton in a fetal position with the face directed east and the head directed north west.

Additional burials. There are three later burials associated with this tomb. We think that these burials belong to relatives of the owner of the tomb. The first burial, which is associated with the tomb is of large size and is attached to the mastaba on the north. The other two burials are located outside the open court of the tomb, to the left as one enters the tomb.

The First Attached Burial

This mastaba is an additional construction to the north of the original mastaba. It was built of mudbrick and tafla and cased with tafla, then topped with another level of limestone mortar (**Fig. 5**). Dimensions: L. 1.70m (from east to west); W. 1.40m (from north to south); maximum H. 1.30m.

The upper part of the mastaba was destroyed, however, the lower part is still in good state of preservation with the remains of two niches:

- The Northern Niche is located on the north side of the mastaba façade. H. 122cm; W. 13cm; D. 15cm.
- The Southern Niche is located on the south side of the façade of the mastaba. H. 80cm (the upper part was destroyed); W. 12cm; D. 14cm.

In front of the mastaba, three small offering basins with no inscriptions were found:

- The First Basin is located on the north side of the façade and is 1.22m high, 13cm wide and 15cm deep.
- The Second Basin was found close to the south of the first basin. It is 16cm long, 10.5cm wide and 7cm high.
- The Third Basin was found about also to the south of the second one. It measures 18cm in length, 14cm in width, and 9cm in height.

The Burial Shaft of the First Associated Tomb

We excavated on the western side of the façade of the first associated tomb that contains the two niches. We noticed that this mastaba is completely destroyed on the western side. At a depth of about 1.35m below this mastaba was found a small burial shaft. The top part is 1m from north to south and 98cm. from east to west and is all cut in the rock. At a depth of about 35cm, we found a small vessel of white fine limestone, broken on the edge and the base. It was used most probably for cosmetics. Dimensions: H. 5.8cm; 8.3cm (at the rim); 7.5cm (at the base); 4.5cm (int. D.).

On the bottom of the shaft at a depth of about 90cm were found the remains of the skeleton of the tomb owner. The skeleton was broken into many pieces by tomb robbers of a later period.

The Second Attached Burial

This burial is located 32cm on the left as one enters the front hall of the main tomb and to the south of the tomb entrance (**Fig. 4**). The south edge is attached to the north edge of the third attached burial. This is a very small rectangular mastaba built of mudbrick and tafla. Remains of mortar can be seen on the façade of this tomb. Dimensions: L. 75cm; W. 56cm; D. 35cm.

A small limestone false door is located in the middle of the façade. Dimensions: H. 20cm; W. 10cm.

The false door has no inscription, but in front of it we found another small limestone offering basin. Some hieroglyphic signs are still visible on the edges, but the basin is in a bad condition because of salt. Dimensions: L. 12.5cm; W. 10.5cm; H. 7cm.

The Third Associated Burial

This burial is located directly to the south of the second one. The south wall is attached to the north wall of the third burial. It is rectangular in shape, and built of mudbrick and

tafla. Remains of white plaster are visible on the façade. Dimensions: L. 0.80m; W. 0.65m; H. 0.40m.

A small niche was modeled to represent the false door on the south edge of the façade. Dimensions: H. 16cm; W. 6cm; D. 10cm.

The Pottery. About 30cm to the right as one enters from the tomb entrance was found a shallow shaft. Its dimensions are: L. 0.90m (E–W); W. 0.80m (N–S); D. 0.90m.

The interior of the shaft was filled with tafla, sand and small chunks of stones of natural rock. No skeleton was discovered but inside were found a great number of pottery sherds from beer jars. Also found was a complete beer jar (measuring 30cm in height, 20cm in depth, its rim dimension being of 9.5cm). Also found were a bread mold and pieces of Meidum ware. There were in addition pieces of animal bones from remains of offering to the deceased. We think that this shaft was used as a cache for the pottery and offerings that the deceased might wish to use in the afterlife.

Artifacts Found Inside the Tomb G.S.E 2011 are:

1. The offering basin that tells us the name of the tomb owner *Tntj* (see below).
2. Three small limestone offering basins with no inscription found in front of the mastaba that belong to the first associated burial.
3. A small limestone offering burial with letters on the edges.
4. A small limestone vessel used for cosmetics.
5. A complete pottery vessel found in the pottery shaft.
6. Bread mold found inside the pottery shaft.
7. Pieces of Meidum wares found in the pottery shaft with an excellent quality.
8. Pieces of beer jar and bread molds found inside the pottery shaft.

COMMENT

The title *imy-r3 sšr* is an administrative title. It is in our case a designate of a person who may have served in the workmen village or the workmen camp as an in charge of the distribution of the linen or even of the production of the linen for the workmen.⁷

It is difficult to date this tomb based on its architecture because we do not have any parallel of dated workmen tombs of the Old Kingdom. The pottery from the cemetery belongs the end of the Fourth Dynasty and Fifth Dynasty.⁸ The cemetery and the workmen's installation at Giza is date from the reign of Khufu to the end of the Fifth Dynasty. There is no archaeological evidence of the Sixth Dynasty date. The title *imy-r3* is for a person

⁷ See for another case of an overseer of linen and different interpretation: K. KURASZKIEWICZ, The Owner of Chapel 15 and his Family, *PAM XV* (Reports 2003), 2004, p. 124. For the bibliography of the title *imy-r3 sšr*, see: D. JONES, Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles. Epithets and phrases of the Old Kingdom I, *BAR IS 866* (I), Oxford 2000, p. 234, No. 864; see also H. FISHER, Egyptian Studies: Varia Nova, New York 1996, pp. 2, 8, Nos 5, 216.

⁸ Z. HAWASS, A. SENUSSI, Old Kingdom Pottery from Giza, Cairo 2008.

who is supervising a group of people. *Tntj* was in charge of the linen workmen. It was not until the beginning of the Fifth Dynasty that the title *imy-r3* occurred in the administration of the funerary establishment.⁹ Therefore, I believe that the tomb of the overseer of the linen *Tntj* is dated to the Fifth Dynasty.

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⁹ Z. HAWASS, *The Funerary Establishments of Khufu, Khafre and Menkaure during the Old Kingdom 2*, PhD dissertation, Ann Arbor-Michigan 1987, p. 580; see also N. STRUDWICK, *The Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom. The Highest Titles and their Holders*, London-Boston-Henley-Melbourne 1985, p. 337; see also W. HELCK, *imy-r3*, *ZÄS* 79, 1954, pp. 76–77. The title *imy-r3* is absent at Giza in the Fourth Dynasty.