

# **GÖTTINGER MISZELLEN**

**Beiträge zur ägyptologischen Diskussion**

**Heft 139**

**Göttingen 1994**

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## HINTING AS A METHOD OF OLD KINGDOM TOMB DECORATION

### I

#### THE OFFERING-STONE AND THE FALSE DOOR OF THE DWARF *SNB*

Andrey O. Bolshakov

**AS** the most significant source for reconstructing almost any aspect of life in the Old Kingdom, tomb decorations (both murals and sculpture) have been carefully studied for a century and a half. Consequently, everyday life, household organization and social relations of the 3rd millennium BC have been more or less adequately reconstructed. At present much attention is paid not only to the contents of the decorations, but also to their arrangement in the tomb [Bolshakov, 1986; Harpur, 1987]; careful analysis of their placement allows us to arrive at conclusions of paramount importance concerning Egyptian concepts about the tomb and, in turn, about the next world and the world order in general. It is also useful to take into account subjects that were never represented in the tomb or in certain chambers. Doing so affords a rare opportunity to draw nearer to the ancient system of values reflected in tomb decoration [Bolshakov, 1987, 31-33] and to fathom some *weltanschaulich* notions [Bolshakov, 1982].

There is, however, one more promising sphere of action that has never attracted the attention of Old Kingdom oriented Egyptologists. In some cases it was impossible to express certain ideas by means of images due to either pure technical, or *weltanschaulich* reasons. Then the Egyptians used an indirect method of information encoding, namely hinting at the subjects that could not be represented. Since the Egyptians themselves clearly understood the meaning of each scene or any other component of tomb decoration, various hints were rather often used in the Old Kingdom tombs, but they remain unnoticed by modern

scholars who usually do not conceptualize the tomb as a whole and who cannot sense its organic functioning.

The search for and interpretation of such hints is of urgent importance, since otherwise we lose much information that is worth analyzing. The aim of the present paper is to put the problem forward, to give some examples of hinting, to explain its meaning in such cases and to prove the problem formulated does in fact exist. The author believes it is enough to make this for initial inquiry.

The late Old Kingdom Giza mastaba of the dwarf ---*w(j)-snb(w):Snb*<sup>1</sup> excavated by H.Junker in 1927 is famous first of all for the unique family sculpture group<sup>2</sup> which is one of the most remarkable pieces of Old Kingdom statuary showing "realistically" (in the individualized manner) both the facial features and the body of the dwarf deformed by *hypochondroplasia* [Dasen, 1988, 263]. The unusual false door of *Snb*, which is covered with most interesting scenes [Junker, Giza V, 33-98], is also well known. These outstanding monuments cast a shadow on another unique element of his tomb decoration - the offering-stone<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This dating was offered by Junker [Giza V, 3-6] and shared by a number of later scholars: J.Vandier [1958, 137] - Dyn.VI, E.Terrace - Dyn.VI [Terrace & Fischer, 1970, 68], J.Málek - middle Dyn.VI or later [Baines & Málek, 1980, 163; *PM III*<sup>2</sup>, 101], Y.Harpur [1987, 269] - middle reign of *Pjpf II* - Dyn.VIII, H.G.Fischer [1990, 90-91, note 1] - Dyn.VI, but hardly later than the reign of *Pjpf I* and others. However, another dating trend ascribes the tomb of *Snb* to much earlier times. W.S.Smith [1949, 57] supposed that the tomb can "be assigned to late in Dyn.V if not early Dyn.VI", but he never proved his hypothesis. E.Russmann [1989, 39-41, 214-215], also without special discussion, interprets *Snb* as belonging to early - middle Dyn.V. More radical is B.V.Bothmer who dates *Snb* to late Dyn.IV - early Dyn.V (see [Aldred, 1980, 77], but cf. [Bothmer, 1982, 36]); unfortunately, his arguments were never expounded in detail. Bothmer is followed by Dia' Abou-Ghazi [1980, 29] - Dyn.IV. The extremist, however, is N.Cherpion, who has recently re-dated a number of Dyn.VI Giza mastabas back to Dyn.IV, that of *Snb* being allegedly contemporary to *Da.f-r(w)* [Cherpion, 1984, 35-54; 1989, 89]. I cannot discuss the problem within the limits of the present paper, but, as an advocate of the late dating, I would like to mention here only one dating criterion never applied to *Snb*: the arrangement of murals in his chapel that are placed solely on the false door, but not on the walls. This circumstance entirely conforms to and is the utmost manifestation of the Dyn.VI Giza tendency to transfer murals to the west wall from the rest of the chapel (for the meaning of this rearrangement see [Bolshakov, 1986, 122-123]).

Decisive arguments for dating may be derived from several tombs recently discovered in the neighbourhood of *Snb* and, probably, synchronous to him for prosopographic reasons [Hawass, 1991, 158]. Unfortunately, of all the materials coming from the tombs in question only a family group of dwarf *Frr(j)-n(j)-njk(w)* has been published [ibid., pl.13-14]. It is very much like the statuary of Dyn.IV, but the final dating of the newly found tombs and the ascertainment of their relation to *Snb* should be delayed till their complete publication appears. However, even the re-dating of *Snb* to Dyn.IV would by no means affect the proposed interpretation of his monuments (see footnote 18).

<sup>2</sup> Cairo, JE 51281; [*PM III*<sup>2</sup>, 102-103] and add [Málek, 1986, fig. on p.38; Spanell, 1988, fig.9; Russmann, 1989, fig. on p.40].

<sup>3</sup> CG 57026 [Junker, Giza V, Taf.7bc, Abb.28; Abou-Ghazi, 1980, 29]



**Fig.1.** The false door and offering-stone of *Snb*  
(after [Junker, *Giza V*, Taf.4])

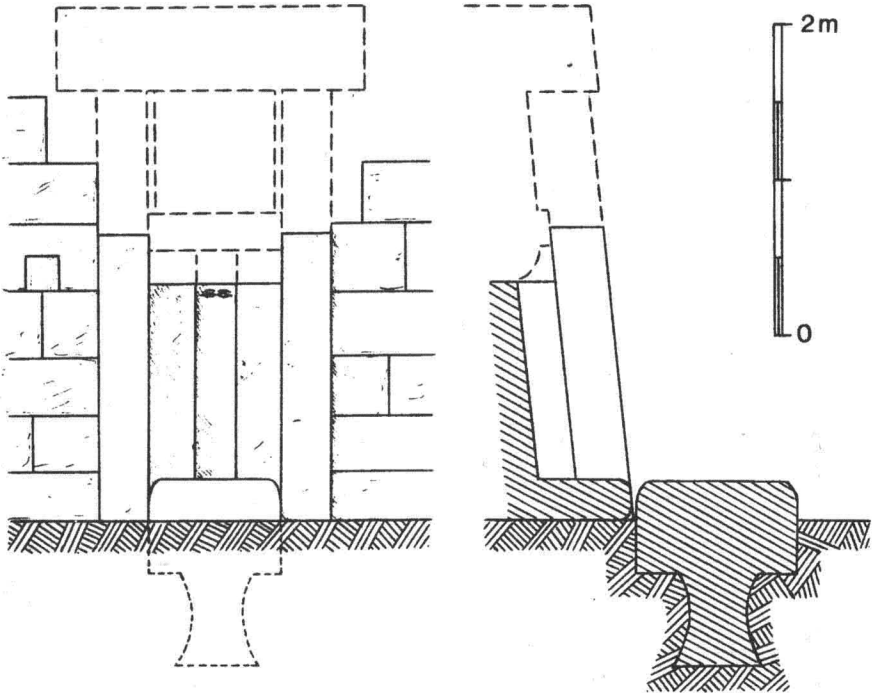




Fig.2. The elevation and section of the false door + offering-stone composition of *Snb*  
(after [Junker, *Giza V*, Abb.1])

placed in front of the false door (fig.1-2) that still does not rank high enough in the history of Egyptian *Weltanschauung*.

Describing the circumstances of the discovery Junker [*Giza V*, 100] wrote:

"Bei der Freilegung der Kultkammer kam vor der Scheintür eine schwere Granitplatte von 100 x 90 x 60 cm zutage. Ihre Oberseite lag zu gleicher Höhe wie die des Kalksteinblockes, auf dem der innere Teil der Scheintür aufsaß. Wir hielten sie zunächst für einen der Opfersteine, wie sie häufig gerade für der Hauptscheintür gefunden werden. Bei dem Versuch, die Platte zu heben, stießen wir auf unerwartete Schwierigkeiten. Hebel und Winde vermochten nicht, sie im geringsten zu bewegen, obwohl ihr Gewicht nur rund 1½ Tonnen betragen konnte. Um dem Hindernis auf die Spur zu kommen, wurde der Boden Ringsum aufgegraben. Zu unserer Überraschung stellte sich heraus, daß die Platte mit einem schweren Fuß aus einem Stück gearbeitet war. Der Fuß mit Kreuzrundem Durchschnitt und eingezogenen Seiten stellt den Untersatz dar, auf den man Schüsseln und Platten und insondernheit auch den Schpeisetisch niedersetzte. Das

Ganze, , ist eine plastische Umsetzung des Opfertisch-Bildes . So erklärt sich auch die ungewöhnliche Stärke des Oberteiles; er gibt die Tafel mit dem aufgesetzten Brothälften wieder. Bei dem harten Werkstoff sind die Einzelheiten nicht nachgebildet, aber die Schrägung an dem oberen Enden soll ohne Zweifel die abfallenden oberen Enden der Brothälften andeuten, wobei man von dem Flachbild ausging und nicht von der Wirklichkeit, da ja die Brote in der Tat auf dem Tisch lagen, nicht aufgestellt waren".

Junker's *editio princeps* contains two most important observations on the offering-stone of *Snb*: first, it is identified as an imitation of a one-legged *h3w.t*-table; second, its unusual form is explained as imitating not the table itself, but its two-dimensional representations in the traditional table scene. Thus, the way for a future study has been paved, but, unfortunately, no one has attempted it for half a century. Even those several lines devoted to the "table" of *Snb* in the book by Maha Mostafa on the Old Kingdom offering-stones apply not to its extraordinary form, but to the standard inscriptions on its surface.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the interpretation of the object in question appears both hopeful and obvious enough.

Since the offering-stone is shaped after a *h3w.t*-table, there can be little doubt that we are faced with a hint at the table scene so often encountered in tomb murals; the fact that the offering-stone reproduces the form of *h3w.t* in two dimensional representations conforms well to this supposition. Thus, we can assume that the figure of the tomb owner was implied to be at the table, but not represented. Strange as the absence of the subject of the scene may seem, it is possible to prove our assumption on the basis of several Old Kingdom monuments. One should not only forget that any offering-stone exists not by itself, but in indissoluble connection with the false door. Although there are no exact analogies to the false door + offering-stone complex of *Snb*, three monuments can nonetheless be regarded as having much in common with it.

The first is the unusual false door in the subterranean chapel of *Jdw* (G 7102) dating back to the reign of *Pjpt I* (fig.3-4).<sup>5</sup> The statue of the tomb owner is carved in a recess cut through the lower part of the false door. The statue emerging from the recess at the floor level is a "bust" representing the upper part of the body of *Jdw* with his arms, bent at the elbows, stretched towards the *h3p*-shaped offering-stone lying in front of the false door. Though this most unusual monument has been considered "rather absurd in its concept" [Málek, 1986, 109], its meaning and origin are beyond any doubt [Bolshakov, 1991, 5-14].

<sup>4</sup> Mostafa [1982, 123] just refers to the circumstance that "die Opfertafel ist von Junker ausführlich besprochen worden" paying no attention to the consequences of Junker's study.

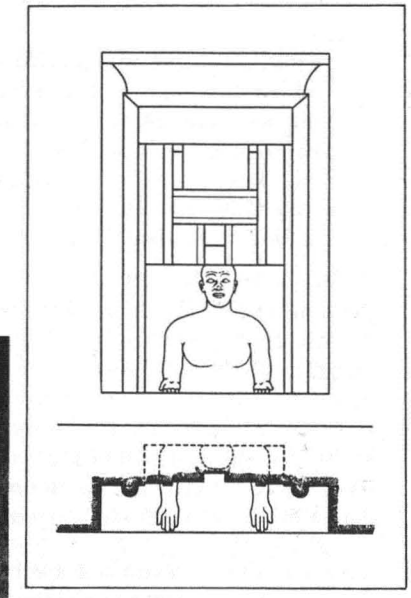
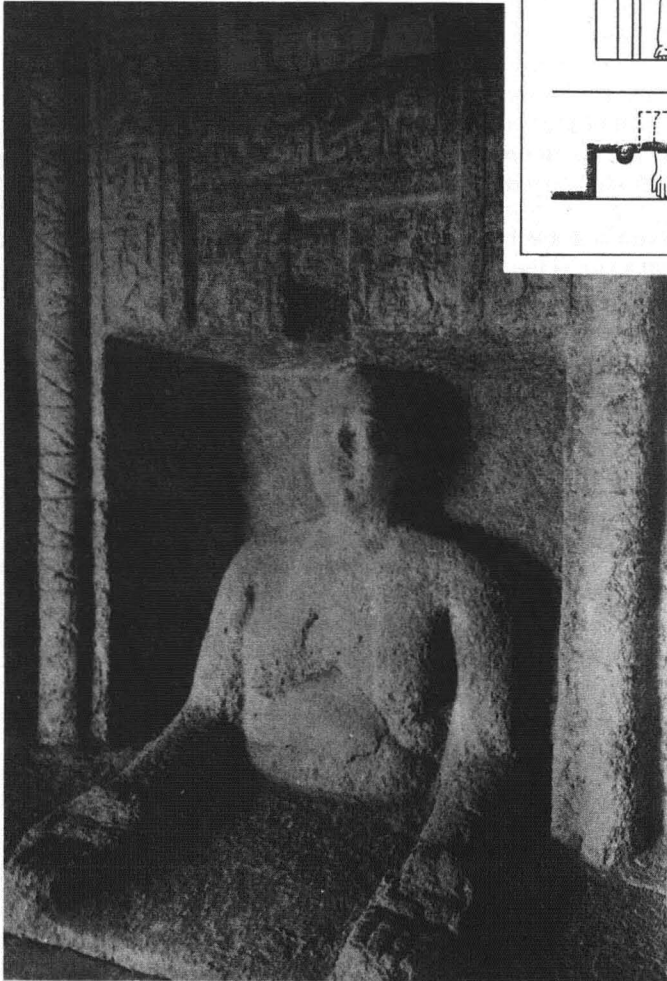
<sup>5</sup> [PM III<sup>2</sup>, 186] and add [Simpson, 1976-1, pl.29abc; Fischer, 1986, pl. 27; Málek, 1986, fig. on p.109; M&M, 1988, frontispiece; Bolshakov, 1991, fig.3].



**Fig.3**

**The false door of *Jāw*,  
G 7102**

**(Courtesy Museum of Fine  
Arts, Boston)**



**Fig.4**  
**Drawing of  
the false door  
of *Jāw***  
**(after [Reisner,  
1942, fig.214])**

The purpose of any false door is to afford the *k3*-Double of the tomb owner an opportunity to "go forth" from it in order to receive offerings.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, a striding statue is sometimes placed in the doorway<sup>7</sup> or beside the false door<sup>8</sup>. Such statues expressly illustrate (and within the bounds of Egyptian belief, guarantee) the very process of "going forth"; it would therefore be natural to show its purpose as well - the reception of offerings. The "bust" of *Jdw*, in essence, emulates the mural table scenes by means of sculpture, and its strange form should be explained by difficulties in realizing the two-dimensional picture in the round.<sup>9</sup> Chiselling a sitting statue with its arm outstretched was impossible for two reasons: first, an arm distorting the solidity of the statue mass would be at variance with all the traditions of Egyptian stone sculpture; second, it would have involved a great many technical problems and made the statue more liable to damage both during and after its carving. However, since the offering-stone was functionally equal to the *h3w.t* in the table scene,<sup>10</sup> it was only necessary to somehow associate the statue of the tomb owner with it. As the offering-stone lay on the floor and was flat, the arms and hands of the statue also had to lie on the floor. Thus, the problem of fragility was solved and the mass of the statue was not distorted. As a result, the statue had inevitably to be half-length, growing out, as it were, from the floor, and it was necessary to cut a special recess for it in the lower part of the false door, violating its traditional appearance. These shortcomings, however, were more than compensated for by the fact that, despite its inner discrepancy, the composition characterized the functions of both the false door and the statue as best as it could.

For a long time the "bust" of *Jdw* with outstretched arms had been regarded as incomparable with any other piece of sculpture and, thus, of no conclusive importance. However, the present writer recently managed to prove that the celebrated Boston bust of *ḥḥ(w)-h3.f* (G 7510),<sup>11</sup> the vizier of *H'(j) f-r(w)* (fig. 5),

<sup>6</sup> For the concept of the *k3* as the present writer interprets it see [Bolshakov, 1987].

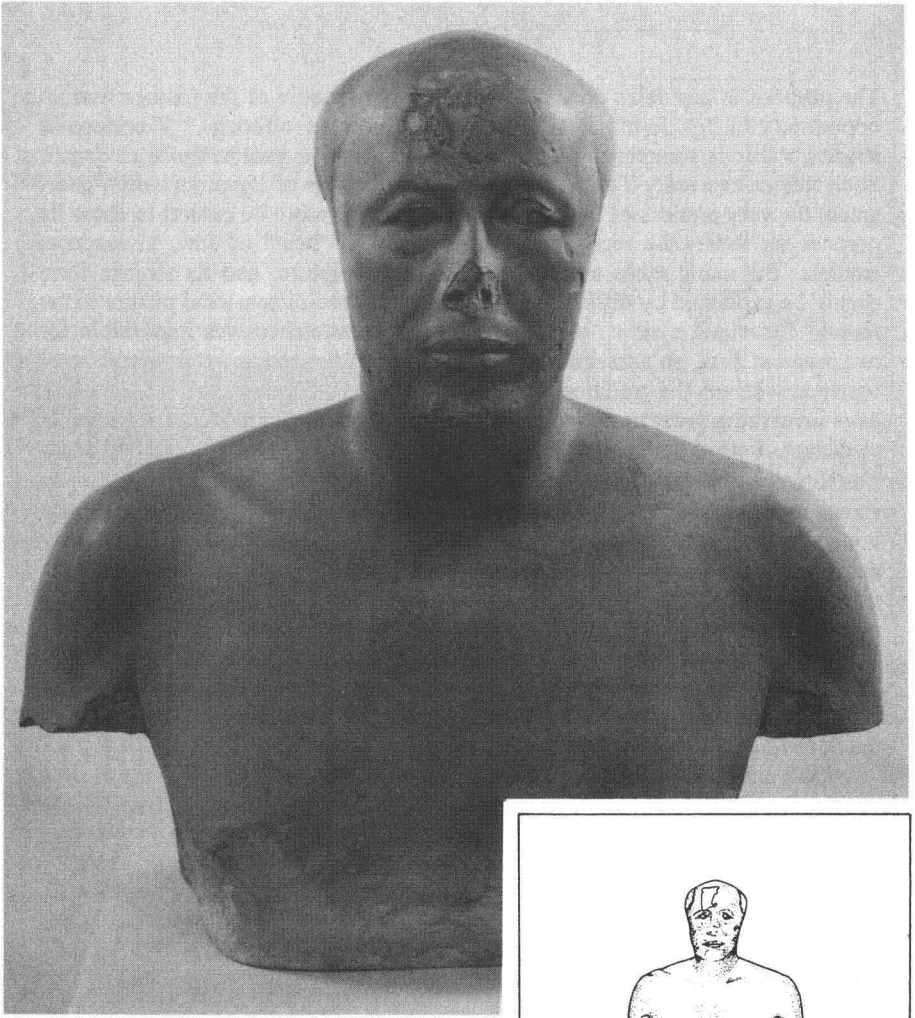
<sup>7</sup> E.g., *B'-ttj* (?), BM 1165 [*Hiero. Texts* I<sup>2</sup>, pl. IV-1; *PM* III<sup>2</sup>, 742], *ḥḥ(w)-h3.f*, Saqqara D 63, CG 57190 [Murray, 1905, pl. 18-19; *PM* III<sup>2</sup>, 598; *Njr-nḥ(w)*, Saqqara or Giza, CG 1447 [Borchardt, 1937, Bl. 33; *PM* III<sup>2</sup>, 736], *N(j)-s(w)-ra*, G 5032, MFA 21.961 [Sanborn, 1922, fig. on p. 27 (top); *PM* III<sup>2</sup>, 145].

<sup>8</sup> E.g., *H'(j) f-r(w)-h3.f*, LG 75 [*LD* II, Bl. 11]; *H'(j) f-r(w)*, LG 95 [*LD* II, Bl. 44a; Hassan, Giza V, pl. 27, fig. 107]; *K3(j)-ḥr-ptḥ*, G 7721 [Kendall, 1981, fig. 7-8]; *Njr-ssm-ptḥ*, Saqqara [Capart, 1907, pl. 94-96; *PM* III<sup>2</sup>, 516].

<sup>9</sup> True, the "bust" of *Jdw* is not carved in the round, being actually but a very high relief chiselled in the back side of the niche and in the chapel floor; however, this difference is of no importance for the problem discussed here.

<sup>10</sup> The form of the *ḥḥ*-shaped offering-stone expresses the idea of the presence of offerings no less adequately than the picture of the table heaped with food.

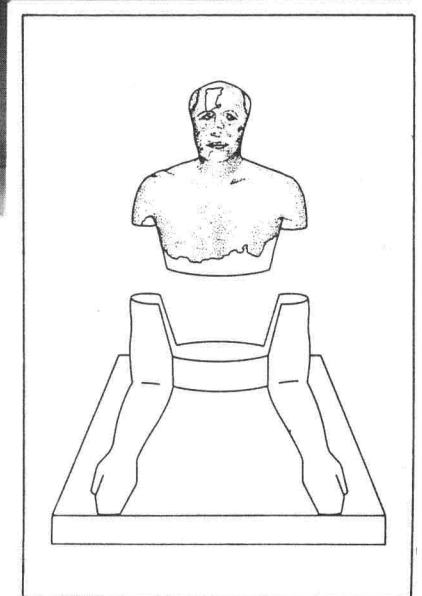
<sup>11</sup> MFA 27.442 [*PM* III<sup>2</sup>, 196] and add [*Boston Handbook*, 1976, fig. on p. 147; Fischer, 1986, pl. 25; Spanell, 1988, fig. 37; Bianchi, 1989, fig. 27; Bolshakov, 1991, fig. 1, 9 and cover].



**Fig.5**  
The bust of *ḥb(w)-ḥ3.f*, G 7510  
(Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)



**Fig.6**  
Reconstruction of the bust  
of *ḥb(w)-ḥ3.f*  
(after [Bolshakov, 1991, fig.10],  
drawing: Yvonne Markowitz)



had originally had attached arms [Bolshakov, 1991] (fig.6). Now, when we can compare these two statues, it is obvious that the idea of receiving food offerings could be adequately expressed by the Egyptians both in mural compositions and in sculpture. It should also be noted that it was quite possible to do without the lower part of the figure, which was implied, but not represented. Moreover, the "bust" of *Jdw* proves that we are dealing not with the *pars pro toto* principle when a part symbolizes the whole, but with the display of the very specific Egyptian "art of hinting" where the imaginary part is supposed to be as real as the represented one.<sup>12</sup>

A striking analogy to the "hint composition" of *Snb* is provided by the mural painting in the burial chamber of *ḥḥ(.j)-m-ḥr(w)* (fig.9). It reproduces the traditional table scene in detail, but the chair in front of the table remains empty [Firth & Gunn, 1926-2, pl.6 = Badawy, 1978, fig.80]. This unusual composition appeared in accordance with the logic of development of the burial chamber's decorative system. Decoration of the Old Kingdom burial chambers had several stages of elaboration: (1) the prohibition of any representations in the burial chamber was one of the strictest rules till the end of Dyn.V; (2) the first murals depicting only inanimate objects appeared under *Wnjs*;<sup>13</sup> (3) pictures of the servants<sup>14</sup> and of the tomb owner at the table<sup>15</sup> became permissible in the early Dyn.VI; and finally (4) one of the Giza burial chambers was decorated almost like a chapel at the end of Dyn.VI.<sup>16</sup> The decorative pattern of *ḥḥ(.j)-m-ḥr(w)*, being a transitional one between stages (2) and (3),<sup>17</sup> is a successful attempt to run with the hare and hold with the hounds: since the titles and the names of the tomb owner were inscribed above the chair, he was supposed to be present at the table, but his representation itself, still considered dangerous, was absent.

<sup>12</sup> The case is the same with the so-called "reserve heads" to be discussed in the second part of this paper, and with the "bust" of *Nḥr-sḥm-ptḥ*, incorporated into his false door (Saqqara, *Ḥḥ* Pyramid Cemetery, the reign of *Ḥḥ*) [*PM* III, 516] (fig.7-8). The "bust" carved in the recess above the false door niche instead of the "panel" imitating a window [Firth & Gun, 1926-1, 179; Kees, 1956, 121] thus represents the tomb owner looking out of the window while the man's whole figure is supposed to be present behind the false door.

<sup>13</sup> *N(.j)-ḥḥ-bḥ*, Saqqara, *Wnjs* Pyramid Cemetery [Hassan, *Saqqara* III, pl.16-29]; *Jḥḥ*, usurped by *Zsḥ.t:Jdw.t*, Saqqara, *Wnjs* Pyramid Cemetery [Macramallah, 1935, pl.21-24, 26].

<sup>14</sup> *R(.w)-wr(.w) III*, LG 94 [Hassan, *Giza* V, 296-297].

<sup>15</sup> *Kḥ(.j)-ḥr-ptḥ*, G 5560 [Junker, *Giza* VIII, Taf.21, Abb.56].

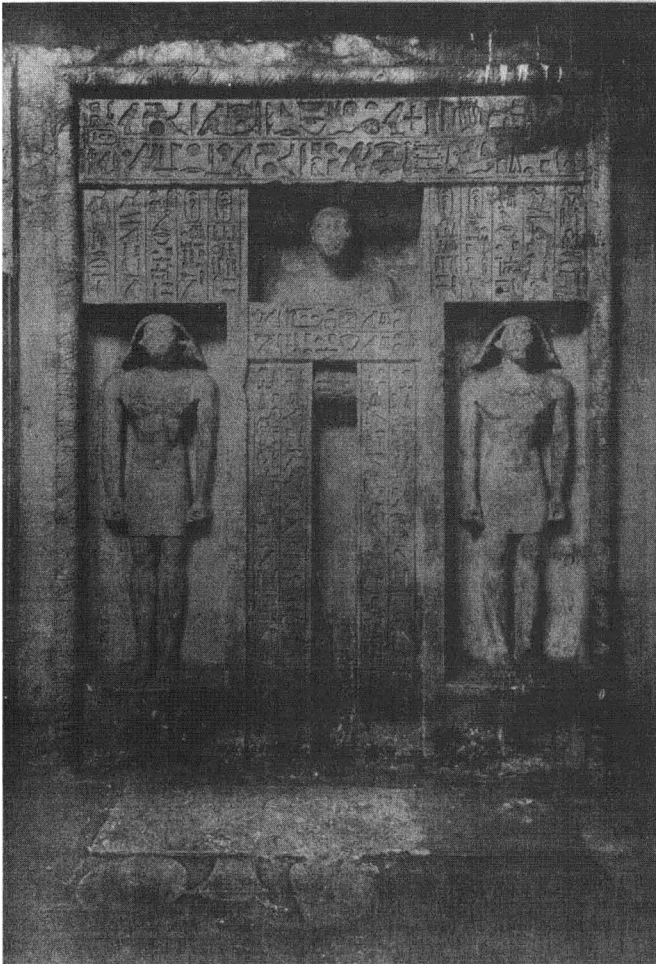
<sup>16</sup> *Kḥ(.j)-m-ḥḥ*, G 4561 [Junker, *Giza* IV, Taf.3-17]. Kanawati's dating (early reign of *Dd.f-r(w)*) [Kanawati, 1977, 155, No.336] is fantastic.

<sup>17</sup> Not chronologically, but typologically: the tomb of *Kḥ(.j)-ḥr-ptḥ* is approximately synchronous to that of *ḥḥ(.j)-m-ḥr(w)*, but since at Giza the rules of tomb decoration were less strict at that time than at Saqqara, the main necropolis of the country, *Kḥ(.j)-ḥr-ptḥ* outran *ḥḥ(.j)-m-ḥr(w)*.

**Fig.7**

**The false door  
of *Nfr-sšm-pth*,  
Saqqara**

(after [Capart,  
1907, pl.94])



**Fig.8**

**The false door  
of *Nfr-sšm-pth*  
(fragment)**

(after [Capart,  
1907, pl.96])

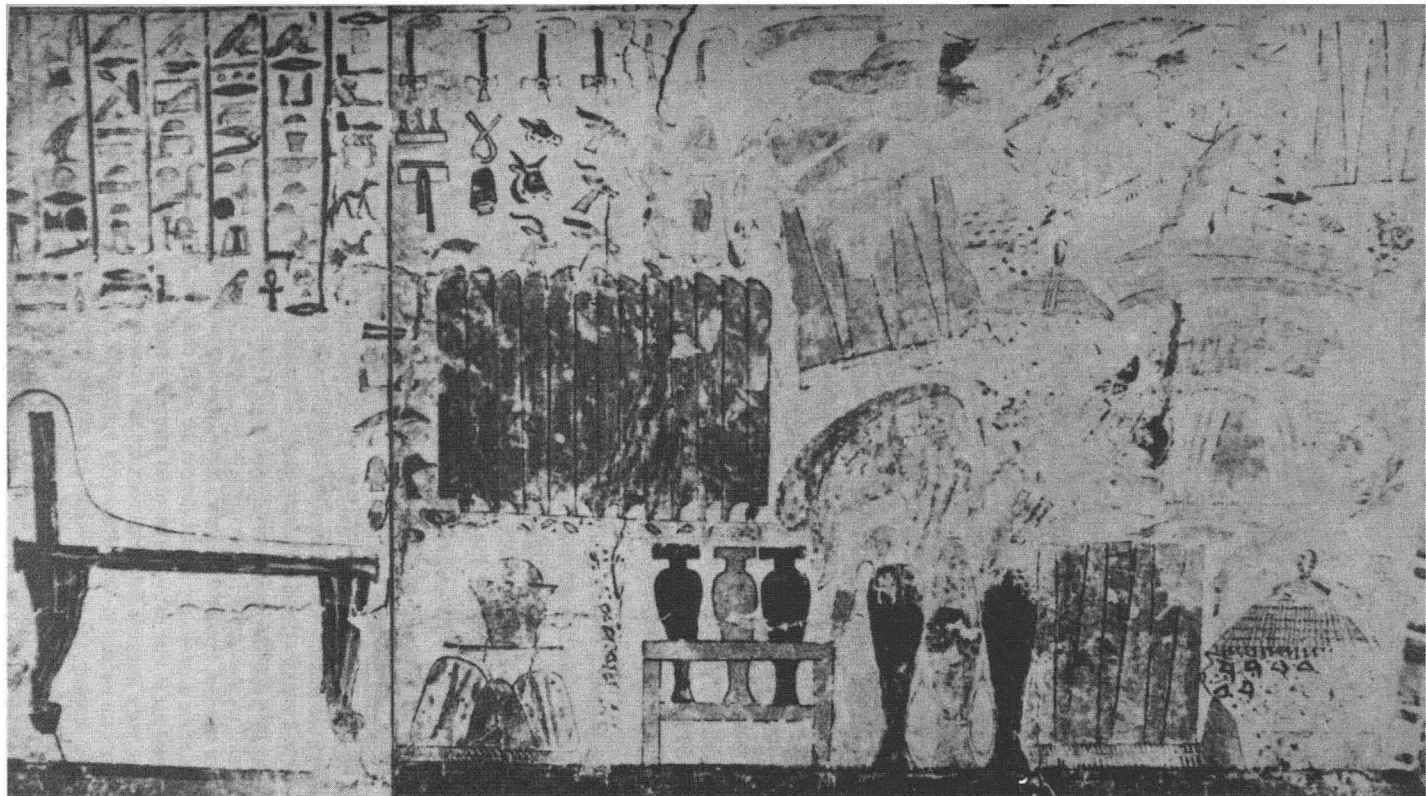


Fig.9. The table scene in the burial chamber of *ḥn(.j)-m-ḥr(w)*  
(after [Badawy, 1978, pl.80])

Thus, we can observe at the table scene three variants of hinting with different degrees of abstraction. In *Jdw* the scene in question is almost virtually reproduced by means of sculpture, only the shape of the offering-stone differing from that of the table and the lower part of the composition being omitted owing to numerous technological problems that would inevitably have arisen when trying to copy the scene as a whole. The case of  $\overline{nh}(w)-h3.f$  is more complicated since both the offering-stone (=table) and the lower part of the body are absent - the former because it would have been quite impossible to put an offering-stone at the level of the bust standing on a pedestal (cf., however, footnote 18), the latter - for the same reasons as in *Jdw*. In both cases the necessity for hinting had purely technical reasons. In  $\overline{nh}(.j)-m-^c-hr(w)$  the motive for hinting was, quite the reverse, of a *weltanschaulich* nature that predetermined the much more abstract form of the hint - the absence of the scene subject. Now, in the light of these three monuments, the above supposition about the offering-stone and the false door of *Snb* as a "hint composition" will not seem so far-fetched. Indeed, we are dealing here with a three-dimensional realization of the pattern of  $\overline{nh}(.j)-m-^c-hr(w)$  and nothing more: the table is present, the tomb owner's figure is omitted.

Of course, one can argue that these are only speculations based on other monuments without any support from the false door and offering-stone of *Snb* themselves. However, I believe the following mental exercise will be telling enough to convince even the sceptics.

Let us imagine that a recess is cut in the lower part of the false door of *Snb*, as deep as its niche, and let us inscribe in it a sitting figure of standard Egyptian proportions - like that carved in *Jdw*.<sup>18</sup> There is a space of approximately 60 cm between the back wall of the niche and the offering stone (fig.2); as the distance between the finger tips and the elbows of the imagined figure, it is the only module for establishing its dimensions. Unfortunately, the space cannot be es-

<sup>18</sup> On no account does it mean that *Snb* copied just the pattern of *Jdw*. The idea of a half-length statue with outstretched arms had appeared long before in  $\overline{nh}(w)-h3.f$  and, since the chapel of the latter had been accessible till at least the end of the Old Kingdom, the concept in question had to be quite familiar to *Snb*. Moreover, in a personal discussion concerning my reconstruction of  $\overline{nh}(w)-h3.f$ , my Boston colleague and friend Peter Lacovara posited that the bust had never stood on a pedestal (Reisner's theory followed by everybody including myself), but was part of the now destroyed false door in the same chamber, thus forming a composition quite analogous to that of *Jdw*. This most interesting supposition should be proved archaeologically, since Reisner's field notebooks are not detailed enough for making final conclusions, but I am inclined to share Lacovara's opinion and hope we shall discuss the problem elsewhere. Anyway, the bust of  $\overline{nh}(w)-h3.f$  already existed before the construction of the tomb of *Snb*, even if the latter should be re-dated back to Dyn.IV (Cherpien's dating - the reign of *Daf-r(w)* - is too early in any case).

tablished more precisely from the draft published by Junker, but absolute dimensions are not of decisive importance for our exercise.

The result of the exercise is striking (fig.10). The reconstructed figure turns out to be very commensurable with both the false door and the table, the latter being excessively lowered into the floor because of the purely constructive desire to arrange its upper surface at the level of the false door base (= with the hands of the imaginary figure). So let us in our mind's eye move the table upwards in order to place its leg at the level of the figure's feet (fig.11). Now the only difference in the proportions of the reconstructed composition from those of the traditional table scene (fig.12) is that the table has an excessively thick leg. However, this can be explained by a quite inevitable distortion of proportions when a small table is turned into an enormous and, thus, heavy and clumsy offering-stone. Thus, the invisible "hint composition" is so similar to the table scene that it cannot be a mere coincidence, our point of departure - the origin of the former from the latter - now finding a cogent confirmation.

Of interest is the fact that it is impossible to inscribe the figure of a dwarf in the reconstructed composition: since his arms and legs are shortened, a dwarf cannot be seated at a table of the given dimensions.

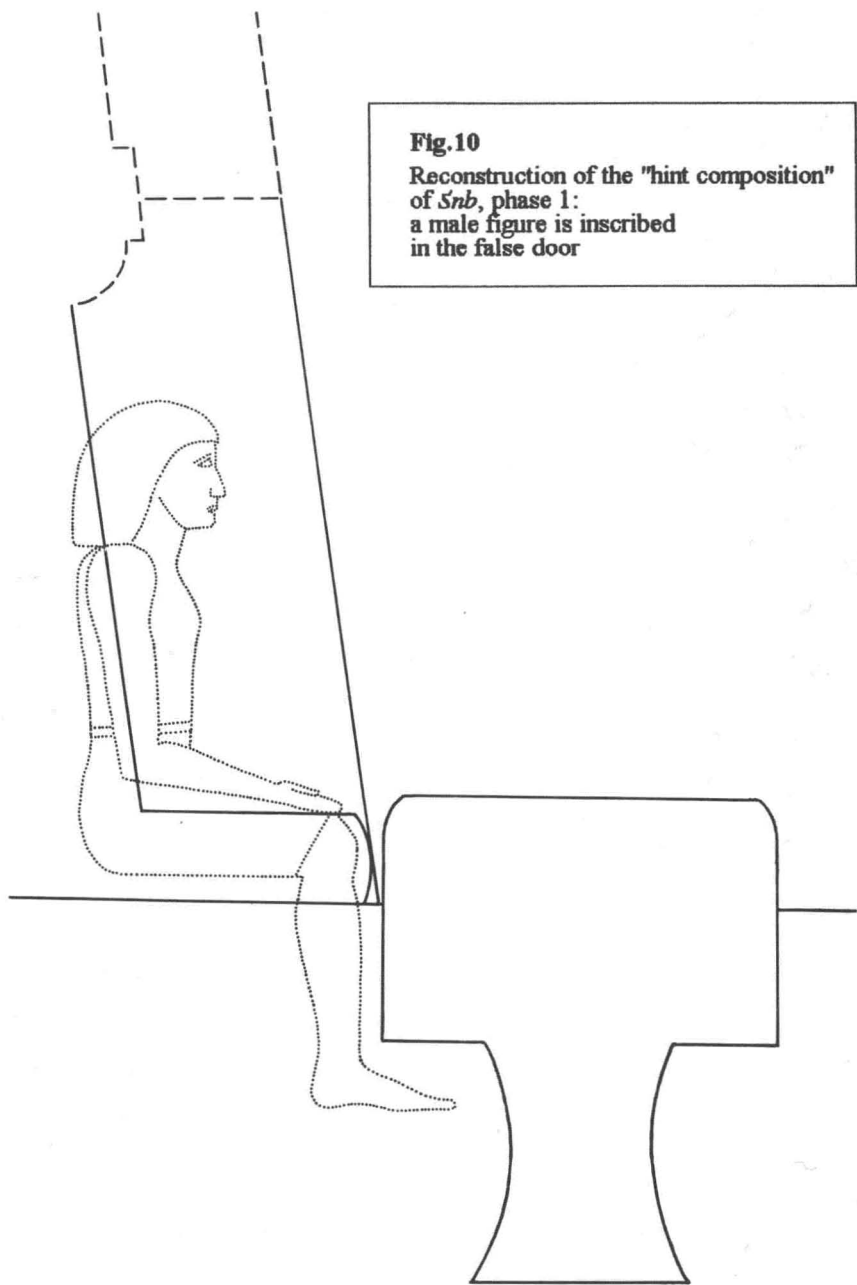
Another unusual feature of the false door of *Snb* can now be explained - the representation of a pair of eyes in the upper part of its niche [Junker, *Giza V*, Taf.4, Abb.2]. *w3d.tj*-eyes appeared on the false doors in the late Dyn.VI [Wiebach, 1981, 160], but the monument of *Snb* is unique in having not *w3d.tj*, but human eyes [Cherpion, 1984, pl.1, 3b]. Cherpion [1984, 47] sees here the first occurrence of eyes on the false door and interprets the fact that the human eyes were represented as an argument for dating *Snb* to Dyn.IV when divine *w3d.tj*-eyes could still not be depicted on the monuments of private persons. However, another explanation can be offered in the light of our understanding of the false door and offering-stone of *Snb*. The eyes might be those of the imaginary figure of *Snb* - its only body part depicted due to the extreme importance of sight for receiving offerings. True, they are arranged appreciably higher than the place where the eyes of the figure in question would be, but this is no cause for bewilderment: if *Snb* should be dated to late Dyn.VI, the tradition of arrangement of *w3d.tj* in the upper part of the niche or even on the lower lintel did exist at that time;<sup>19</sup> the creator of the false door of *Snb* did not want to abandon the traditional high placing, but in order to stress the peculiar character of the de-

<sup>19</sup> E.g., on the lintels of the false doors of *Ipj*, Abusir [Schäfer, 1908, Taf.6, 17] or of *Ḥḥj*, Saqqara [Firth & Gunn, 1926-2, pl.83].



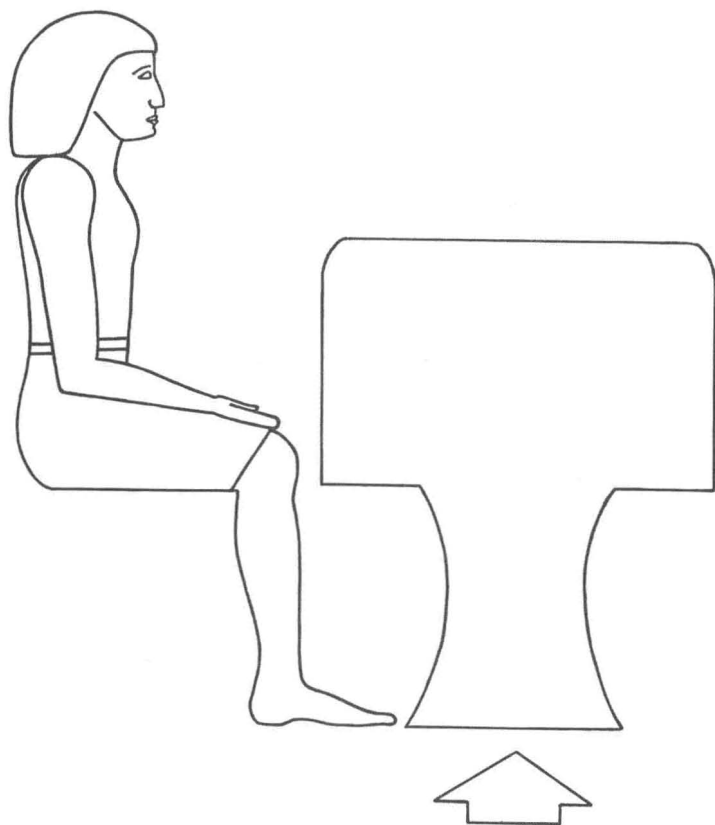
**Fig.10**

Reconstruction of the "hint composition"  
of *Snb*, phase 1:  
a male figure is inscribed  
in the false door



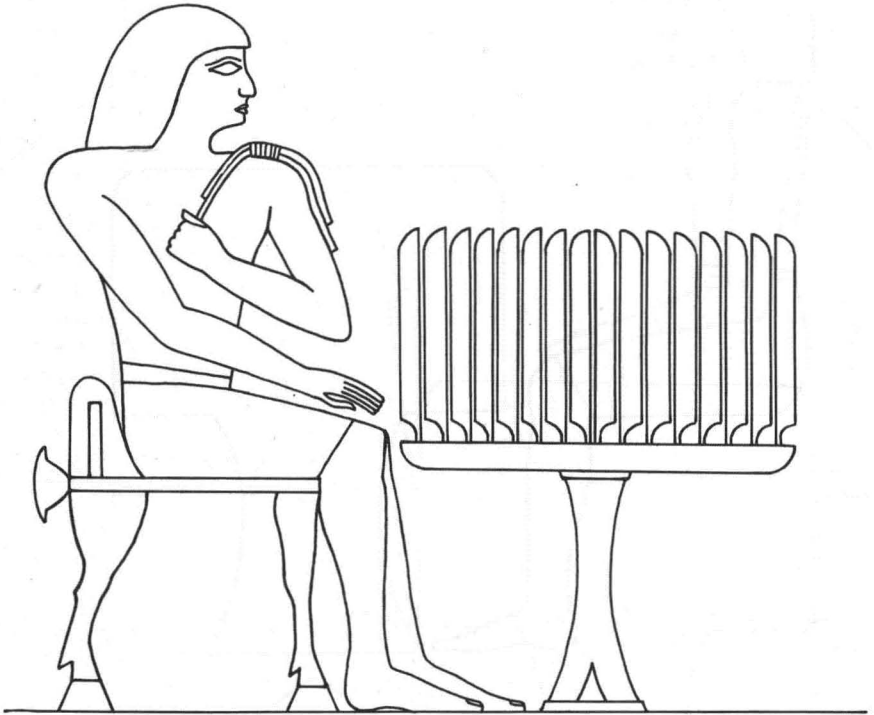
**Fig.11**

Reconstruction of the "hint composition"  
of *Snb*, phase 2:  
the table is moved upwards



**Fig.12**

Reconstruction of the "hint composition" of *Snb*, phase 3:  
the "hint composition" is transformed into traditional table scene



picted eyes carved them in the shape they would have if belonging to the statue of *Snb* in case if it were in reality incorporated into the false door, like in *Jdw*.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, our mental exercise seems to support the above supposition about the offering-stone and the false door of *Snb* as a "hint composition".

Two questions immediately arise which may seem nullify the above reconstruction and, thus, call in question the very existence of the Egyptian "art of hinting": (1) why was such a "hint composition" with an offering-stone shaped as a table created just and only in the tomb of *Snb*, and (2) why was *Snb*, represented both in sculpture and in chapel reliefs (including that on the upper surface of the offering-stone) as a dwarf with all the features of his disease, implied as a man of a normal constitution in the "hint composition"? However, I believe these questions, which are but two aspects of a single problem, can be answered with sufficient certainty if considered in the context of the *weltanschaulich* meaning of the tomb decoration.

It no doubt does reproduce the real life of Egypt in general, but, at the same time, being the means for creating the "afterworld" (the world of the *k3*, the Doubleworld [Bolshakov, 1987]), it distorts reality in some respects in order to render the future life better in comparison with the earthly one. Strange as it may seem, these problems of principle have not attracted the attention of scholars for a long time. Only O.D.Berlev has demonstrated that "Egyptian artists created in tombs the world based on an indisputable and true reflection of reality, but not confined to it and not explainable exclusively by it. Thus, in order to understand this reality by means of the present source... one should look at it through the eyes of the people who created this in many respects precious source. We have tried to compare the objective and the subjective aspects <of the representations>... and immediately ascertained that the Egyptians did not equate them. Moreover, regarding the objective aspect as a given, Egyptians were concerned about the subjective one as well. If he ignores this, the modern scholar... overlooks an important historical and cultural phenomenon that is essential for the description of Egyptian society in general" [Berlev, 1978, 18]<sup>21</sup>. These words

<sup>20</sup> If *Snb* should be dated back to Dyn.IV, the high arrangement of the eyes is more difficult to explain, but in that case the very fact of their occurrence at the time when they were absent on private monuments becomes even more important, being another confirmation of our interpretation of the false door and offering-stone of *Snb* as a "hint composition".

<sup>21</sup> In the original "В гробницах египетские художники создавали мир, основанный на безусловном и верном отражении действительности, но не исчерпываемый ею и не объяснимый только на ее основании. Поэтому, для того, чтобы понять эту реальность с помощью данного источника,... необходимо смотреть на нее глазами людей, позабывшихся о создании этого во многих отношениях драгоценного источника. Мы попытались сопоставить объективное с субъективным... и сразу же убедились, что египтяне не ставили знака равенства между тем и другим. Более того, воспринимая объективное как данное, египтяне были серьезно озабочены субъективной стороной дела, не учитывая которую современный исследователь..."

are an excellent introduction to the discussion of the problem undertaken in Berlev's book, though mainly from a socio-economic point of view. Its *weltanschaulich* slant has recently been scrutinized by the present writer [Bolshakov, 1987, 31-32; Bolshakov, forthcoming, Chapter 12, § 3].

Distortions of reality in tomb decorations can be rather conventionally subdivided into two types. Distortions of the first kind leave unpictured all harmful, evil or dangerous aspects of reality and, thus, exclude them from the Doubleworld.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, distortions of the second kind represent something absent in reality, which improves the Doubleworld and transforms into its integral part.<sup>23</sup> The combination of these two groups of distortions essentially allowed Egyptians to alter some features of the Doubleworld as compared with those of the real life.

Between these two kinds of distortions lies the Egyptian manner of depicting a human being. With isolated exceptions, both men and women are, in spite of their social status, real appearance and age at the moment of the tomb decoration, represented as young and strong, with, by Egyptian standards, ideal facial features and figures. Thus, it was possible to escape old age with its diseases and sufferings in the Doubleworld and to guarantee everyone eternal life at a prime age. The only departure from this ideal appearance was the corpulence of some tomb owners, but since this feature testified to the significance and affluence of the person represented in such a manner, it was worthy of depicting [Bolshakov, 1990, 99-102]. Baldness was another rather widespread feature of both servants<sup>24</sup> and their lords,<sup>25</sup> that was far from the ideal, but, nevertheless,

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проходит мимо важного историко-культурного явления, существенного для характеристики египетского общества в целом".

<sup>22</sup> The most important distortion of the first kind is in the fact that, since an official needed almost nothing outside his household in his lifetime, only the household scenes were transferred into eternity by means of representations; everything else, including the state service, remained unpictured and, thus, non-existent.

<sup>23</sup> Among the distortions of the second kind can be noted, e.g., that, though a rich Old Kingdom household was a totality of villages scattered all over the country, in the system of tomb decorations these estates were shown as a compact whole never existent in reality.

<sup>24</sup> E.g., [Dunham & Simpson, 1974, fig.4; Simpson, 1976-2, pl.C, D; Moussa & Altenmüller, 1977, Abb.10, 12, 24; Wild, 1953, pl.110-113, 115, 117, 119, 120-124; Duell, 1938, pl.21, 52, 169-170; Blackman, 1953, pl.30; Junker, *Giza II*, Abb.18].

<sup>25</sup> The bust of *ḥḥ(w)-ḥ3.f* shows a large bald spot, hair remaining only above the ears and on the back of the head. Ch.Müller [1980, 21, Anm.1] also refers to the "reserve heads" from G 4540 (Boston, MFA 21.328 [PM III<sup>2</sup>, 131]) and G 4440 (Boston, MFA 14.719 [PM III<sup>2</sup>, 128]), as well as to the "Salt head" (Louvre N.2289 [Vandier, 1958, pl.15-1, 3, 4]) having no hair edge line and, thus, interpreted as portraying completely bald people. However, one of her examples is wrong (the "reserve head" of a negroid princess MFA 14.719 does have a hair edge line), while the two others are of no decisive importance. The "reserve head" MFA 21.328 is an image of a young woman who could hardly be completely bald. No doubt it rep-

possible in tomb decorations as a too insignificant departure from the standard to be avoided. However, no real physical defects were ever shown in the Old Kingdom - no one except dwarfism!

One may suppose that the pathology of dwarf servants had to be shown because for this very reason they were viewed as funny creatures, like pets, for amusing their owner, while the specific appearance of court dwarfs had to be transferred to the Doubleworld due to their quite obvious ritualistic destination that was connected with their deformity. However, the case of *Snb* disproves the above suppositions. *Snb*, whose titles [Junker, *Giza* V, 12-17] had nothing to do with the ritual services of dwarfs, had constructed one of the most imposing tombs of his epoch, but even he could not avoid depicting his deformity, though his artists resorted to various tricks in order to make it as imperceptible as possible both in reliefs and in sculpture.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the deformity of dwarfs was such an important aspect of their individuality that it was quite impossible to abandon representing it.

This is only natural. Deformity is the first feature of a dwarf to arrest our attention and to differ him from other people and make him what he is. In exactly the same way Europeans first see in a Chinese his ethnic features and only then distinguish his individuality ("all the Chinese are as like as two peas"). Thus, an average person could be represented with an ideal face and body since it was but an improvement upon his real appearance of no qualitative importance; on the contrary, a dwarf could not be depicted in such a manner - it would mean creating quite a new person having nothing in common with the "original". As a result, the Egyptian artist had to a certain extent to follow nature when representing dwarfs (quite another matter is that a canon was developed for depicting dwarfs as such, and deviations from it, such as the individualized statue of *Snb*, were extremely rare).

So any person who erected a decorated tomb could secure eternal health and normality, of which dwarfs were deprived. Of course, the quality of the future life being predetermined only by the means spent for the tomb decoration, a deformed man of *Snb*'s competence could not reconcile himself to his situation. And, indeed, *Snb* managed to find a way out of the desperate condition - the "hint composition"! Since it was impossible to depict an ideal constitution, it had to be hinted at. The chapels of *ḥḥ(w)-ḥ3.f* and *Jdḥ* (by the way, both located at

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resents a clean-shaven person as does the "Salt head". Moreover, though often dated back to the Old Kingdom (e.g., [Smith, 1949, 40; Vandier, 1958, 54; Matthieu, 1961, 515, note 32]), the latter monument actually is a piece of Amarna sculpture [Müller-Feldman, 1938; Vanderleyen, 1975-2, 24] having nothing to do with our discussion.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the Chicago statuette of a dwarf harpist (Oriental Institute 10641 [Breasted, 1948, pl.81b; Dasen, 1988, pl.1d]) with his legs stretched out in front of him in order to hide their shortness [Silverman, 1969, 61, note 27].

Giza, as well as the tomb of *Snb*) were still accessible to visitors at that time, the "busts" with outstretched arms serving a model for the intended composition, their pattern to be only slightly modified by shaping the offering-stone after a table, hiding its leg in the floor, and excluding the figure of the tomb owner from the table scene. The tomb owner's representation being absent in reality, it was possible to construct the scene proceeding from the proportions of a normal man, since no visible transformation of the dwarf into a person of normal body-build took place due to the creation of the composition in question. As a result, *Snb* could observe the tradition and attain his object at the same time: the false door with the offering-stone in front of it did not differ in outward appearance from countless standard monuments, but the hint at the ideal eternal constitution of *Snb* did exist, remaining invisible to the tomb's visitors.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> One may object to the proposed interpretation of the monuments of *Snb* as being too complicated and forced. However, the circumstance that, being quite inexplicable by themselves, they start functioning as a system as soon as we consider them a "hint composition", is a serious argument which favours our understanding. In addition, a number of more obvious though less refined cases of making "invisible images" can be found elsewhere in the history of Egyptian tomb and temple decoration.

For example, M.Eaton-Krauss [1984, 20] has demonstrated that, though "the scribe statue is one of the common types documented in the known repertory of... Old Kingdom statues,... the 'living' tomb owner is never depicted in his tomb reliefs and paintings as a squatting scribe". Her explanation of the phenomenon is quite right: "The attitude of the squatting scribe documents the tomb owner's service for some superior authority, but in the decoration of Old Kingdom tombs, the tomb owner himself is the highest ranking person depicted. The scribe's attitude is not in keeping with the rank of the tomb owner evinced in the reliefs and paintings of the tomb". However, Eaton-Krauss' observation should be qualified in terms of the *weltanschaulich* aspect of the problem. State service being excluded from the tomb murals (reality distortion of the first kind, see footnote 22), the tomb owner could not be pictured as a scribe on the chapel's walls, but his statue(s), usually isolated in the serdab and having no contacts with the world of murals, could be of various appearances, including that of a scribe. The scribe's image was present in the tomb, remaining non-existent from the viewpoint of the world of murals and, thus, being just a hint at an aspect of reality impossible to reproduce in the Doubleworld.

Another well-known example dating back to the New Kingdom should also be mentioned. *Sn-n-mw.t*, the Chief spokesman of queen *H3.t-Sps.wt*, placed his numerous representations in the temple at Deir el-Bahari, which was an honour too high for a person of non-royal blood. Therefore, he arranged them behind the doors of the respective chambers so that they were invisible while the doors remained opened [Hayes, 1957, 80-84]. His aim, of course, was not to hide the depictions from the eyes of the visitors to the temple (they were made with royal permission [ibid., 84]), but to render them at the same time present and non-existent in the world of temple representations and texts he sought to enter with no legitimate right to do so.

All these cases differ from the "hint composition" of *Snb* in the letter, but not in the spirit.

I would also like to mention one more interesting aspect of the tomb of *Snb*. His limestone sarcophagus (Leipzig, Ägyptisches Museum 3695 [Junker, *G2a V*, Abb.30]) is 184 cm long [ibid., 122], i.e., obviously too long for a dwarf. Can it be another hint at the normal propor-

Now the uniqueness of the "hint composition" of *Snb* can be explained quite satisfactorily. Reflecting, on the one hand, the specific yearning of the dwarf to possess a normal body in the Doubleworld, it could be of use to only a small group of deformed people and was, on the other hand, with the false door and the offering-stone, highly expensive. Most Old Kingdom dwarfs were either jewellers or house servants [Junker, *Giza* V, 8-11] and, of course, they could not erect monuments of their own. Dwarf dancers and musicians [Silverman, 1969] were also never rich enough in spite of their important ritual duties.<sup>28</sup> The only two besides *Snb* Old Kingdom dwarfs of some wealth were the Overseer of linen *Hnm(w)-hṫp(.w)*, who managed to afford a magnificent statue,<sup>29</sup> and the above mentioned Palace dwarf *Pr(j)-rḏ(.j)-ṛḥ(.w)*;<sup>30</sup> however, the tomb of the former remains unknown and that of the latter is still unpublished. In the Middle and New Kingdoms dwarfs never reached a high social status and competence [Seyfried, 1986, 1433], and only one outstanding monument of a dwarf is known from the Late Periods: the splendid granite sarcophagus of *P(ḫ)-wn-ḥḫ.t.f:D(d)-hr(w)* who lived under Dyn.XXX.<sup>31</sup>

One more hypothetical question should be answered in conclusion. Only the upper part of the body being visible in the "bust" made after the pattern of *Jdw*, *Snb* could use it without having anything to do with the complicated "hint composition" - a slight elongation of the arms would most likely not have been too serious a distortion of reality; so why did he not choose the easiest way? Indeed, *Snb* would probably have preferred to make something like the "bust" of *Jdw*, were it not for a unique circumstance: it was just in his chapel where the late Old Kingdom tendency towards concentration of all the representations on the west wall reached its logical conclusion and the false door bore a great number of scenes never associated with it before. The entire surface of the false door being covered with depictions, cutting a large recess through it would require eliminating the greater part of the scenes. The "hint composition" was a reasonable compromise between the necessity of keeping the reliefs and introducing the large tomb owner's figure.

(To be continued)

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tions of his body in the future life? (I am most grateful to Prof. Elke Blumenthal for the present idea, expressed in personal conversation).

<sup>28</sup> With the single exception, see below.

<sup>29</sup> CG 144 [PM III<sup>2</sup>, 722-723] and add [Spanell, 1988, fig.10; Rüssmann, 1989, fig. on p.32].

<sup>30</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>31</sup> CG 29307 [Maspero, 1914, pl.22-26; Maspero & Gauthier, 1939, pl.1-6; PM III<sup>2</sup>, 504-505].



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**BiOr**

*Bibliotheca Orientalis*. Leiden.

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**BM**

British Museum.

**BMFA**

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**G + No**

Giza, universal standard numbering of tombs.

**GM**

*Göttinger Miszellen*. Göttingen.

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**MH**

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