

Items such as grave goods can be incredibly useful in identifying the parts of society that an individual may have been a part of. The grave goods of the Tomb of Senneferi are no exception to this idea. By looking at not only the grave goods, but the tomb as well, it is possible to see that Senneferi was a member of the Ancient Egyptian elite when he was alive.

The tomb of Senneferi at Thebes is an 18th Dynasty tomb found in the Theban necropolis in Egypt. The tomb structure is made up of the main components seen in Theban tombs of the time: the facade, the courtyard, the chapel, and the apartments (Strudwick 2016, 133). While the presence of a superstructure has been seen in other Theban tombs, the uneven bedrock that the tomb is built into, as well as a lack of evidence of a foundation for a possible superstructure, makes the presence of one incredibly unlikely (Strudwick 2018; Strudwick 2016, 133-134).

The facade of the tomb is a large flat wall, with the entrance to the tomb structure in the center. The facade was primarily made with sandstone, the same material used for the rest of the tomb, though there are limestone bricks present (Strudwick 2016, 134). On either side of the facade are two extending walls, which run perpendicular to the facade and extend into the courtyard. These extensions would have been common features of a tomb from the 18th dynasty (Strudwick 2016, 135; Strudwick 2016, 141). A reconstruction of the facade created by Friederike Kampp-Seyfried suggests that the wall sections closest to the facade were built to the same height before being dropped into a sloped shape as they reached the courtyard (Strudwick 2018). What remains of the northern extension can still be seen in the present day, though the southern wall is less visible due to having a security wall for the entrance path of the tomb built into part of it (Strudwick 2016, 135). Above the door is a small niche built into the facade. It is a roughly rectangular shape, although the dimensions vary at both the top and bottom, as well as front and back (Strudwick 2016, 134). The niche likely would have held a stela or other marker,

which would have served a similar purpose to the pyramids found at later tombs (Strudwick 2018).

The courtyard of the tomb is found just before the facade, and as such, the entrance to the tomb itself. It has a rectangular shape, but like the niche seen in the facade, it has an abnormal shape; the north and south sides are longer than the east and west sides, but neither pair has an equal length (Strudwick 2016, 141). It should also be noted that the eastern end of the courtyard, which is opposite to the facade, has yet to be fully excavated due to concerns about running into another tomb complex, so the courtyard's full size is unclear (Strudwick 2016, 141). The modern floor of the courtyard is at its highest point around the center of the courtyard, sloping down toward the door as well as to the east, but it is likely that the floor had originally been leveled during the 18th dynasty (Strudwick 2016, 141-143). On the western end of the courtyard, near the door to the tomb, there are two shallow trenches that would have had plants such as trees growing in them. These planters are likely one of the earliest examples of their kind, as, while unpopular, they are more common in 19th Dynasty tombs and later (Strudwick 2016, 143). In the southeast corner of the courtyard, there is a group of mud bricks that may have been part of a wall surrounding the courtyard. The age of the bricks is unknown, however, so it is also possible that the bricks are from a structure built by later users of the tomb (Strudwick 2016, 141-143).

The tomb's chapel is found immediately upon entering the tomb. The chapel is made up of three sections: the front room, the passage, and the shrine. The front room and shrine are rectangular and are parallel to each other, while the passage runs perpendicularly to both (Strudwick 2018). The first area of the chapel upon entering is the front room, which is a large rectangle 14.6m long by 2.5m wide (Strudwick 2016, 144). The walls are mostly bare, though they originally would have been covered in plaster, as evidenced by the remaining plaster near

the tops of the walls, as well as the ceiling (Strudwick 2016, 144). The next area of the chapel is the passage to the shrine. It is 9.7m long and 2.1m wide, with a vaulted ceiling. Like the front room, the walls are bare but would have been plastered over (Strudwick 2016, 145). The shrine room is the farthest back section of the chapel. It is 12.82m long and 4.6m wide, with two pillars on either side of the room's center that divide it into three. In the middle of the room, between the two pillars, is a niche that may have held offerings (Strudwick 2016, 146). The wall plaster in the shrine is the best surviving of the whole chapel (Strudwick 2016, 146). There are six burial shafts dug inside the shrine of the chapel, though these are not contemporary with the 18th Dynasty and therefore are not relevant to the discussion of Senneferi's tomb (Strudwick 2016, 150).

The contemporary burial shafts are found in the courtyard and are labelled G, H, and I. Shaft G is the 2.2m x 1.4m x 3m deep shaft found in the southwest corner of the courtyard (Strudwick 2016, 151). There is a small doorway at the bottom of the shaft that opens into an unfinished room. The room's purpose is unknown (Strudwick 2016, 151). It is unclear if Shaft G was created in the 18th Dynasty or later, though its being outside instead of inside with the other later shafts indicates that it is likely from the 18th Dynasty (Strudwick 2016, 151). Shaft H is located just west of the center on the southern edge of the courtyard (Strudwick 2016, 151). It is 2m x 1.2m x 8m deep, with a doorway opening to a room at 5.5m deep and at the bottom of the shaft. The higher of these rooms, Room 1, is completely finished, and the room at the bottom of the shaft, Room 2, is finished except for the floor (Strudwick 2016, 152-153). The shaft below Room 1 is notably less regular compared to the 5.5m above it, which, combined with the unfinished floor of Room 2, indicates that the lower section was dug after the tomb's initial use, though still during the 18th Dynasty (Strudwick 2016, 155). Shaft I is opposite Shaft H in the

courtyard, though closer to the center rather than along the north edge (Strudwick 2016, 151). It is 2.5m x 1.3m x 14.5m deep with an east-to-west slanted floor. There is a doorway at the bottom of the shaft in the west wall that opens into a 7.75m long corridor. At the end of this corridor is a left turn into another corridor. This new corridor is missing a floor, as it opens into the “staircase shaft,” which is 1.9m x 1m x 2m deep (Strudwick 2016, 157). At the bottom of the staircase shaft is a rectangular room 4m long and 3.5m wide, with a 0.7m deep trench along the width at the back of the room. The purpose of the trench is unclear (Strudwick 2016, 157-158). On the right wall of the bottom of this trench is a doorway to the final room, a 3m x 2.5m rectangle (Strudwick 2016, 158). Large pieces of silt were found in the final two rooms that may have been used to seal the doorways into them (Strudwick 2016, 158). Some of these silt pieces have hieroglyphs with the name of Senneferi stamped into them, which was likely done after the doors were sealed (Strudwick 2016, 158-159).

Though it is not definitive by any means, the size of the tomb, and to an extent, its mere existence, is likely an indicator of Senneferi having elite status. Even though the tomb fits the norm of other Theban tombs (Strudwick 2016, 133), such a tomb likely would not have belonged to someone of below elite status. The location is also a factor, as the area in which Senneferi’s tomb was built was mostly undeveloped at the time of construction; even if Senneferi was a commoner, his tomb most likely would not have been relatively isolated at the time of construction as he probably would have had to build in a more crowded area due to cost or not being allowed in “nicer” areas or necropolises.

The vast majority of the artifacts associated with Senneferi’s burial come from Shaft I. Artifacts from the main shaft are largely ceramics, from a wide range of time periods, including the 18th Dynasty and Late Roman. Non-ceramic artifacts found in the shaft include pieces of

granite that were likely part of a false door from the 18th Dynasty and limestone fragments that likely originated from a stela, also of the 18th Dynasty (Strudwick 2016, 161). There were more artifacts found deeper into Shaft I, most of which were associated with the 18th Dynasty. These artifacts include coffin fragments, jewelry, and papyri.

The coffin fragments are made from an unknown number of coffins, though it was at least four, and were all of the “black” type. At least two of these coffins would have been used for the burial of Senneferi himself, with others likely belonging to his wife, and some of the slightly newer fragments possibly belonging to the coffin or coffins of one of their children or grandchildren (Strudwick 2018; Strudwick 2016, 356). Senneferi’s body being placed in multiple coffins for his burial would have been a sign of him being an elite within Egyptian society (Strudwick 2016, 356), but that is not the only marker of status that can be seen with the coffins. A number of the coffin fragments have lines of white plaster, which likely would have been gilded over (Strudwick 2016, 350-353). Approximately 60 pieces of gold leaf that was likely used for gilding have also been recovered (Strudwick 2016, 475-476), all but confirming that the coffins had been gilded. While it could have been possible for someone of a more common standing to have gilding on their coffin, it is more likely that decoration of that kind would be present on objects belonging to the elite. The construction of the coffins is also a sign of status. Three coffin fragments that were recovered had either the name or title of Senneferi carved in relief. This was not standard with “black” coffins, as they were primarily built with a blank nameplate that would be painted over, meaning that of the coffins found in Shaft I, at least those belonging to Senneferi had to have been custom-made (Strudwick 2016, 353). The presence of at least two custom-built coffins is another sign that Senneferi was of elite status, as someone of lower status would be more likely to have a “standard” coffin.

The jewelry found in Shaft I is made up of beads and bracelets, with both types being made of faience. The beads were primarily found in the main shaft, becoming much less common deeper into the chambers, with only seven total beads being found beyond the staircase shaft compared to the 369 found within the main shaft (Strudwick 2016, 459-460). The bracelets, however, were found primarily beyond the staircase. Two bracelets were recovered, though neither was whole and had to be recreated with the fragments found in Shaft I (Strudwick 2016, 460-461). It is possible that there were originally gold bracelets alongside the faience that had been stolen by thieves, though there does not appear to be any evidence of this in Shaft I (Strudwick 2016, 461). The jewelry found in Shaft I helps to show Senneferi's status in a similar way to his coffins, specifically how they were decorated. While a common person may have had jewelry made from a material such as faience, the number of beads found makes it appear more likely that Senneferi would have at least been a richer commoner, if not an elite.

The most clear evidence that Senneferi belonged to the elite class is the presence of papyri in Shaft I. Hundreds of papyrus fragments were recovered from Shaft I, forming three sets of papyri containing the name of Senneferi, his titles, and passages from the *Book of the Dead* (Strudwick 2018). While postdating the 18th Dynasty by several centuries, examples of similar papyri from the 21st Dynasty are known to have been incredibly expensive (Cooney 2007, 278), which makes it incredibly likely that Senneferi was a member of the Egyptian elite; he likely would have never been able to afford even a single papyrus had he been of lesser status.

Without even looking at all of the grave goods found in the tomb of Sennerferi, it is possible to see that he was of elite status. The coffins and papyri, especially, are markers of a member of the elite, showing that he likely had a large amount of wealth. This idea is then

reinforced by the large quantities of jewelry and the simple existence of the tomb itself, making Senneferi's status almost certain.

Works Cited

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