

TT99: Senneferi

Ancient Egyptian tomb TT99 is a new kingdom burial site 'in the southern part of the Sheikh Abdel Qurna, within the Upper Enclose'.¹ This is located on the west bank of Thebes and 'at the time of its construction, TT99 must have been a prominent landmark in that part of Sheikh Abdel Qurna'.² This would have been the first insight into the potential wealth and importance of the owner, discovered to be Sn-nfr or Sn-nfri³. He was indicated to be the kings seal bearer, in which the title can be seen throughout this tomb and other monuments. This essay aims to discuss the tomb, Senneferi, the contents found inside, and what these can teach us all about this person. Features like the architecture, the finds and the material culture of which can define the memory of the person depicted inside the tomb. The information discussed is based upon the book on TT99 edited by Nigel Strudwick and written by a group of the excavators.

Sennefer or Senneferi can be seen in multiple depictions with various names and titles, many of which have been classes as honorary. The most commonly inscribed non-honorific titles are that of: overseer of seal-bearers and chancellor⁴. This makes these the most likely titles to be true in reflection of the job he led in his life. Some of the other titles associated with him and his tomb include: overseer of priests, supervisor of the upbringing of the royal children; with more being seen in his biography. This biography mentions different promotions from different places within Egypt, with additional roles being added after moving to Thebes, only there is a slight issue with the debated fact on if this list of titles includes honorary or non-honorary titles. The many translations and transliterations of these titles may be difficult to read for those without a full understanding of hieroglyphs, and some of these titles may be different variations of the same title but differ slightly when written due to the location or scribe. This may account for the unknown exact title list and what his exact role was within his career.

Senneferi's family can be seen mentioned within this book, and has been referenced from damaged wall scenes in which the majority of information, including his family, has been lost. The text itself on page 19 is partly contradictory in way of familial connections and information, due to stating that due to the damage 'little information about Senneferi's family, particularly his children, is forthcoming'⁵ but however proceeds to list information about the possible family members of his. This could on the other hand, be due to information found outside of this tomb and within the tombs or monuments of family members, within which more information may have survived. It could potentially be this outside knowledge that has previously been discovered that ties into what was found in this tomb that has been added to the facts known about Senneferi and his family.

These family members of Senneferi include: his parents Satdjehuty and Haydjehuty; a possible brother or siblings, indicated through the finding of sn=f and snw=f (brother and siblings respectfully); his wife Taiamu and his children Neb-s, Renena and son in law Amenhotep⁶ (a seal-bearer or priest during his life).

¹ Pg.37

² Pg.39

³ Pg.8

⁴ Pg.9

⁵ Pg.19

⁶ Pg.19

The tomb of Senneferi is located in the 'southern part of the hill of Sheikh Abdel Qurna'⁷, which is roughly situated between the valley of the Queens and the valley of the Kings. The tombs alignments in this location is similar to other tombs from this time period, due to the positions and overlays of the tombs, and the use of the land in subsequent time periods. The axis in which 'almost all the tombs of the reign of Thutmose III in this area appear to have an orientation towards Luxor temple'⁸. This may have been the case due to religious reasons or due to pharaonic preference. Helen Strudwick notes in chapter 2 that Senneferi was notably important, and that his tomb must have 'been a prominent landmark ... with Senneferi's importance and wealth'⁹. She further comments that later in time when this area was 'further developed, his tomb remained an important feature in the landscape there'¹⁰, giving the indication that Senneferi continued to have an important legacy both in life and death that may have been seen for some time after the tomb was sealed.

The layout of the tomb itself 'like most Theban tombs, the monument consists of four major distinct areas, a superstructure, an open courtyard, a chapel and underground apartments'¹¹. The superstructure consists of a 0.8 x 0.8 metre cleared area of bedrock 7cm underneath layers of limestone chippings and dust. Evidence of mudbrick use was found but determined to be exclusive to the construction of the façade only and 'not part of another structure'¹². 'TT99 thus is of the most common type in the 18th dynasty, whereby a niche in the façade functions in place of a free-standing superstructure'¹³. The courtyard is an irregularly shaped rectangle in which 'measures approximately 11.30m at the west, 14.25m at the south, 15.14m at the north and 12.22m at the east'¹⁴. The shape of the chapel is an 'inverted T-shaped form common with the 18th dynasty'¹⁵ that consists of a broad front room, and a longish corridor or passage leading to a rear room or shrine with pillars¹⁶. One of the ways in which this tomb varies from the ones surrounding are the number of pillars found inside the rear room of the chapel.

The front room of the inner rooms has a measurement of 14.6 x 2.5m and a maximum height of 3.1m¹⁷. the conditions that this room was discover as was that most of the 'original plaster decoration of the room has been lost'¹⁸, with the remaining covered areas seems to be the ceiling, which itself has damage from smoke. One of the features recorded of the room are the 'emplacements cut into the walls for stelae and false doors'¹⁹, features with necessity for the departed within the tomb, of which the soul can pass through the false doors into the afterlife and back to this land via the Ka and the Ba. This is done as a religious notion as the Ancient Egyptians believed that death was not the end of someone's life but as a journey into the afterlife which is unending and can allow for more opportunities for each individual that passes through.

⁷ Pg.37

⁸ Pg.39

⁹ Pg.40

¹⁰ Pg.40

¹¹ Pg.45

¹² Pg.45

¹³ Pg.45

¹⁴ Pg.54

¹⁵ Pg.55

¹⁶ Pg.55

¹⁷ Pg.58

¹⁸ Pg.58

¹⁹ Pg.58

The passage is a 'completely rectangular shape' that connects the front room and the rear room with a length of 9.7m, a width of 2.1m and a height of 3.1m²⁰. The ceiling and walls were built up with plaster and stones and seems to have been one of the areas that has suffered the most from a loss of decoration and damage. Of which remains of the wall decoration being located mostly within the top metre of the walls. This means that the information and depictions that were once apart of this tomb are not present any more and this knowledge is now lost and will not be know as any chance of recovery is slim as the plaster is also damaged. Thus the life of Senneferi is unknown and only the inference from the facts discovered can be understood and essentially guessed.

The rear room at the end of the passage is a shrine of a rectangular shaped chamber with 2 pillars, with a max length of '12.82m and width 4.6m'²¹. 'an offering or statue niche'²² was excavated at a height of '1.05m'²³ at the centre of the rear wall, this alongside the decoration that remain on the walls and the ceiling means that 'more decoration has survived in this room than elsewhere in the tomb'²⁴. From which most of the knowledge of what is depicted in this tomb about Senneferi or others can be deciphered from this room and can be compared to information found outside the tomb by other excavators.

Most of the material culture found in this tomb were discovered in these room and inside the 3 shafts in the courtyard, labelled G, H and I, excavated by Robert Mond in 1997 and 1998. Found inside these shaft are pottery, funerary item fragments, bones and furniture evidence. Shaft G was found to have a 'mixture of materials from the new kingdom to modern times'²⁵, including pottery, funerary cone fragments and more than 25 fragments of funerary garlands of 'uncertain date'²⁶. Shaft H had 'late roman ... modern ceramics'²⁷, some funerary cones, coffin fragments, bones and linen, and a headrest base. Shaft I contained approximately 540 kg of ceramics similar to those found in the courtyard, along with fragments from stela and false doors. These finds show the diversity of the objects that were placed inside the tomb and evidence of reuse from later dates, as some roman materials has been found inside these areas.

Some material culture found inside TT99 were that of bones, 'a considerable quantity of human remains was recovered'²⁸, of roughly '336'²⁹ disarticulated bones found in these 3 shafts and shafts A-F of which no information was added to this edition of the book. The sex of the bones have been determined from bones 'which show characteristic sexual dimorphism'³⁰ and a minimum number of individuals (MNI) determined³¹. It was deemed 'probable that one of the males was Senneferi himself, but, unfortunately, it is impossible to determine which bones were his'³², meaning that the

²⁰ Pg.58

²¹ Pg.61

²² Pg.61

²³ Pg.61

²⁴ Pg.61

²⁵ Pg.66

²⁶ Pg.66

²⁷ Pg.66-68

²⁸ Pg.315

²⁹ Pg.315

³⁰ Pg.315

³¹ Pg.315

³² Pg.316

tomb of Senneferi may not actually contain himself due to this reason and also the reused of his tomb.

The material culture mentioned in this essay barely scratches the surface of the vast amount contained inside tomb TT99 as not all could be added, however the material culture mentioned can create a small idea of what this tomb may have originally contained when Senneferi was buried inside when he passed. The image created by the depictions on the walls that remain and the objects found show that he may have been someone of significant wealth and importance during the 18th dynasty, in which was aimed to be shown with the building of this tomb.

Material culture encompasses more than just items in which a person can hold, as the wall decorations can be deemed as a part of this even if it is not quite in the common material image. Most of the finds inside the tomb can be named material culture, some of which are: bones, funerary equipment (including coffin fragments, shabtis, seals and cones), personal items (like the headrest, faience jewellery and offerings) and pottery/ ceramics.

The complexity of finds within this tomb shows that Senneferi was important and that this should be reflected in death. He was buried near to other people of importance as a statement to this. The decoration seen inside the tomb encaptures an important person and thus depicts his life. The architecture of the tomb shows the effort that went into creating this and emphasises aspects of his career within as the inside is vast with multiple rooms and shafts. The remaining decoration inside the tomb characterises his life and shows scenes most likely of Senneferi's life and his journey into the afterlife. The connections with his family connects Senneferi to these people and their lives and cementing a timeline in which he fit, adding himself and his great career of important jobs into history. The smaller finds of fragments from various categories of tomb objects shows different aspects that together form an identity of this person and their culture. The composition of all these finds merge to create a visual representation and understanding of Senneferi and the material culture of which aid in determining the facts of his life and the period in which he was buried. A material culture can identify the civilisation of a being and the symbolism of their culture itself alongside a material culture of which shows the physical items that build these cultures.

The material culture that was excavated and determined to be connected to Senneferi from the 18th dynasty in the new kingdom period, are a way in which people proved his importance and honoured him even in death as these grave goods were placed alongside him in the different rooms built for these specific reasons. This all amounts up to depict an important man and his wealth of which he built in his life.

Bibliography

Strudwick N (ed), *The Tomb of Pharaoh's Chancellor Senneferi at Thebes (TT99): The New Kingdom: Volume I* (1st edn, Oxbow Books 2016)

Strudwick and Strudwick, chapter 4 'the tomb, its architecture and history', section 4.1, referencing: Kampp, *Thebanische Nekropole*, page 109.