

The material culture of Tomb TT99 at Thebes

Tomb TT99 is in Theban necropolis, specifically within the necropolis of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna¹ and can be dated to the 18th dynasty in the New Kingdom². It consists of three main rooms, a passage, and eight shafts, two of which will be discussed. The front of the tomb is within a courtyard and has a doorway situated underneath stonework, within which is a niche³. Some areas possess rougher stonework than others and appear as a rubble fill. The niche is also rough and irregular in appearance⁴. The courtyard contains a brick structure unrelated to the original tomb and potentially present due to its most recent usage as a place of residence⁵. Additionally, the courtyard contains three shafts, of which one can be shown to belong to the original tomb owner. The front room contains a possible shaft and decoration along each of the walls. This decoration details the major achievements of the tomb owner, including the relationship had with the king⁶. Within the front room is evidence of a false door and a niche with the potential to house a stela opposite it⁷. The front room has a doorway with a relief above it that leads through to the passage and possesses a cartouche for Thutmose III⁸. Depicted on the walls of the passage are offerings of funerary equipment, including items such as bows and arrows⁹. The passage leads through to the rear room, also known as the chapel, which reestablishes the achievements and biography of the deceased, but also shows the funeral procession¹⁰. There are five possible shafts in the rear room and a niche on the back wall, potentially for a statue or a stela¹¹. Though it was popular at the time, there is no indication of a superstructure above the tomb¹². Hieroglyphs within the tomb indicate the name of the tomb owner to be Senneferi, though this can be written as Sennefer¹³.

Shaft I, present within the courtyard, is 14.25 meters deep¹⁴ and contains three rooms. Within the shaft, fragments of at least four anthropoid coffins were discovered, grouped by wood type and surface finish¹⁵. It is possible one of the coffins belonged to the tomb

¹ (Strudwick, 2017l)

² (Strudwick, 2016a, pp. 1)

³ (Strudwick, 2017d)

⁴ (Strudwick, 2017d)

⁵ (Strudwick, 2016d, pp. 100)

⁶ (Strudwick, 2016e, pp. 162)

⁷ (Strudwick, 2016e, pp. 162)

⁸ (Strudwick, 2017g)

⁹ (Strudwick, 2017h)

¹⁰ (Strudwick, 2016e, pp. 162)

¹¹ (Strudwick, 2017j)

¹² (Strudwick, 2016a, pp. 6)

¹³ (Strudwick, 2016b, pp.8)

¹⁴ (Strudwick, 2016a, pp. 7)

¹⁵ (Taylor, 2016, pp. 183)

owner, Sennerferi, due to the presence of writing on several fragments¹⁶. The coffins appear to have been well crafted, with the fragments showing care and expertise in their construction¹⁷. Additionally, some areas display evidence of gilding¹⁸. Though there are a minimum of four coffins present, the human remains within Shaft I indicate a minimum of five adults¹⁹. Shaft I contains ritual items likely used for the opening of the mouth ritual, as well as fragments of jewellery²⁰ and ivory²¹. Some pottery is present within this shaft and may be from the period the shaft was used, however, fill within the shaft indicates presence of later material within²². The vast majority of items found within this shaft are ceramics, of which a further majority come from after the 18th dynasty. Ceramics that can be dated to the tombs original use are likely to not be in their original positions due to later robberies and disturbances²³. Additionally, some sherds may be from later instances of use, having been deposited in the shaft from the shaft fill²⁴. Multiple items appear to be within the tomb as part of the opening of the mouth ritual, an important part of the rituals for the deceased, wherein they would become reanimated and be able to see, hear, and eat as they did in life²⁵. This ritual is found throughout the pharaonic period in Egypt and is a standard practice for the deceased during this time²⁶.

The courtyard and tomb chapel both contain one-hundred and thirty funerary cones showing the name of the tomb owner and his occupation of seal-bearer for the king and the overseer of seal-bearers²⁷. Other funerary cones were discovered but have been damaged, making it difficult to confirm the owner, though it is still likely to be the owner of TT99²⁸. The walls within the front room contain fragmentary hieroglyphs, including the name of the tomb owner, his titles, and his occupation. It shows his achievements, including illustrations of a trip to Lebanon to source wood, and subsequent praise from the king for doing so²⁹. Illustrations of the tomb owner also display him with wide banded collars and surrounded by scribes³⁰. The wall potentially containing a false door has decoration and offerings to Anubis. On the opposite wall, a rounded top niche indicates the presence of a stela³¹, and decoration shows Asiatics and Syrians with

¹⁶ (Taylor, 2016, pp. 183)

¹⁷ (Taylor, 2016, pp. 184)

¹⁸ (Taylor, 2016, pp. 185)

¹⁹ (Waldron, 2016, pp. 315)

²⁰ (Strudwick, 2016c, pp. 272)

²¹ (Strudwick, 2016c, pp. 260)

²² (Rose, 2016, pp. 192)

²³ (Rose, 2016, pp. 161)

²⁴ (Rose, 2016, pp. 162)

²⁵ (Macy Roth, 2005)

²⁶ (Macy Roth, 2005)

²⁷ (Strudwick and Strudwick, 2016, pp. 49)

²⁸ (Strudwick and Strudwick, 2016, pp. 50)

²⁹ (Strudwick, 2016b, pp. 17)

³⁰ (Strudwick, 2017f)

³¹ (Strudwick, 2017b)

their hands raised in adoration³². The fragmentary remains of the passage show funerary offerings for the deceased, with weapons, furniture, divine emblems, and staves and sceptres³³. The passage contains fire damage, potentially from its period as a place of residence³⁴. The walls within the rear room reiterate the tomb owner's biography and may be the first tomb to show a figure of Bes³⁵. The funeral procession of the tomb owner is displayed within this area of the tomb, as well as an offering list. The best preserved wall within the tomb is of rites between the deceased and his wife and a display of the opening of the mouth ritual³⁶. Above the niche in the centre of the room, either for a statue or stela, is an illustration of the tomb owner giving offerings to Anubis.

The location of the tomb is the first indication of a tomb owner of high status, being in the Theban necropolis, specifically in the necropolis of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna³⁷. This area houses a number of high-status tombs belonging to the elite and administration during the New Kingdom, including architects, mayors, and priests³⁸. The remaining hieroglyphs present within TT99 repeatedly indicate the tomb owner to be the "Overseer of seal-bearers," such as on wall 1³⁹. Additionally, a wall within the front room indicates the tomb owner being praised by the king for work within Lebanon. The second most apparent indication of status is the size and layout of the tomb. The presence of a courtyard, front room, and chapel are in line with the standards for elite tombs during the 18th dynasty⁴⁰. Decoration within the rooms of the tomb is also indicative of the status of the tomb owner. Ornate decoration indicates the capacity to pay for the craftsmanship required to do such decoration. Long inscriptions of hieroglyphs and several illustrations across multiple rooms shows the tomb owner could afford for time and skill to be demonstrated within his tomb. The craftsmanship of the coffins found in Shaft I further show the status of the owner. The type of coffin is indicative of the common coffins in the reign of Thutmose III⁴¹, and evidence of gilding can be found on the coffin fragments⁴². Within Shaft I are also two amphorae that are stamped with cartouches, indicating they are royal gifts⁴³, further showing the importance of the tomb owner to the ruling dynasty, in turn reflecting his status.

³² (Strudwick, 2017b)

³³ (Strudwick, 2017h)

³⁴ (Strudwick, 2016d, pp. 100)

³⁵ (Strudwick, 2017i)

³⁶ (Strudwick, 2017k)

³⁷ (Strudwick, 2017l)

³⁸ (Madain Project, 2021)

³⁹ (Strudwick, 2017a)

⁴⁰ (Strudwick and Strudwick, 2016, pp. 55)

⁴¹ (Taylor, 2016, pp 181)

⁴² (Taylor, 2016, pp. 185)

⁴³ (Rose, 2016, 192)

Shaft I likely contains the remains of the tomb owner, Senneferi, as shown by fragments of coffin found within possessing an inscription⁴⁴. Further human remains found within this shaft are of unknown origin, but following the customs of the time-period, may have been direct members of his family⁴⁵. There is some evidence within the tomb to suggest Senneferi had children, and it is hypothesised that one of the sets of remains found within Shaft I is the remains of one of his children⁴⁶. However, there is no inscription, fragmentary or otherwise, present on any coffins to indicate this is the case. Shaft I was not the only shaft with human remains, with Shaft H, present on the opposite side of the courtyard to Shaft I, containing at least twenty-one adults, one sub-adult, three children, and one neonate⁴⁷. Ceramics found within this shaft suggest that several phases of burials occurred within the era of the 18th dynasty and that it may have been extended upon further usage⁴⁸. Remains found within this shaft may be related to the original tomb owner, with later family making use of such a prestigious tomb for as long as possible⁴⁹. The shaft consists of two rooms and has a large collection of items pharaonic in origin, but also from later periods⁵⁰. Coffin fragments were also discovered within Room 1 of the shaft⁵¹, and a large faience shabti was discovered within Room 2⁵².

Evidence from both the tomb and from outside it indicates Senneferi to be, primarily, the Overseer of the Seal-bearers, as well as the treasurer⁵³, titles which likely brought prestige and wealth. Within the 18th dynasty, the term treasurer expands beyond just the individual tasked with overseeing the wealth of the king, but to managing foreign expeditions and tributes⁵⁴, something Senneferi is shown to do within TT99. The position is certainly one of great importance with the rising wealth of the elite in the reign of Thutmose III⁵⁵. Record of Senneferi the Overseer of Seal-bearers during the 18th dynasty exists outside of TT99. A block statue was acquired by the British Museum in the early 19th century CE, though its original location is unknown. It depicts a man sitting with his knees pulled to his chest, and his robe pulled over them. The statue is covered in text, with a long offering formula and the reestablishment of Senneferi as the Overseer of Seal-Bearers and, also, as a royal messenger⁵⁶. The statue is carefully well crafted, a further display of the wealth and importance of Senneferi. Other statue fragments have been discovered, though their provenance is unknown. A stela was

⁴⁴ (Taylor, 2016, pp. 181)

⁴⁵ (Strudwick, 2016a, pp. 7)

⁴⁶ (Strudwick, 2016b, pp. 19)

⁴⁷ (Waldron, 2016, pp. 321)

⁴⁸ (Rose, 2016a, pp. 294)

⁴⁹ (Strudwick and Strudwick, 2016, pp. 69)

⁵⁰ (Rose, 2016a, pp. 296)

⁵¹ (Strudwick and Strudwick, 2016, pp. 66)

⁵² (Strudwick and Strudwick, 2016, pp. 68)

⁵³ (Strudwick, 2016b, pp. 9)

⁵⁴ (Strudwick, 2016b, pp. 13)

⁵⁵ (Shaw, 2003, pp.212)

⁵⁶ (Strudwick, 2016b, pp. 24)

discovered in front of the pylon of Thutmose III, made of sandstone, and depicting Thutmose III and Senneferi, whom has his arms raised in adoration⁵⁷. He is also depicted in temple scenes and discussed in other tombs, inscriptions, and papyri⁵⁸.

The tomb indicates having been used throughout history for a variety of uses and has evidence of several robberies throughout time⁵⁹. One of the uses was as a residence, resulting in the construction of the brick wall through the courtyard⁶⁰, and a large amount of animal bones present within the tomb. While some bones can be attributed to offerings from the tomb's original usage, it is likely the majority are from the usage as a residence⁶¹. The tombs continued usage from its construction creates issues when investigating the original owner and contents of the tomb. The decoration on the walls is fragmentary and mostly destroyed, partially through deliberate acts such as the removal of Amun during the Amarna period⁶², but partially from acts that are likely accidental and follow from its use as a residence. As stated by Strudwick, the "very damaged and incomplete nature of the decoration of TT99 makes an overall assessment of the decorative programme difficult."⁶³ Despite this, however, the name of the tomb owner, his occupation, and the tomb itself still remains and can be compared with other existing material, giving some idea to the life lead by the original tomb owner and his status within 18th dynasty society.

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⁵⁷ (Strudwick, 2016b, pp. 33)

⁵⁸ (Strudwick, 2016b, pp. 34)

⁵⁹ (Strudwick and Strudwick, 2016, pp. 81)

⁶⁰ (Strudwick, 2017e)

⁶¹ (Waldron, 2016, pp. 333)

⁶² (Strudwick and Strudwick, 2016, pp. 64)

⁶³ (Strudwick, 2016e, pp. 161)

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