

REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE THEBAN MISSION 2002

Nigel Strudwick

The Permanent Committee of the Supreme Council for Antiquities granted permission in the summer of 2002 for the University of Cambridge Theban Mission for one final short season to complete work in Theban Private Tomb 99 of Senneferi.

I should like to thank Dr Zahi Hawass, Principal Secretary of the SCA, and all members of the Committee for agreeing to the request for permission to work in Thebes. In particular I am grateful to all the staff in Abbasiya for enabling this permission to be carried out. In Luxor, I am indebted to Mr Mohamed el-Biale, General Director of Upper Egypt and Luxor, along with his deputy Mr Bakhit for their assistance. The inspector attached to the Mission during the season was Mr Ahmed Ezz ed-Din, without whom the season would not have been so successful, and we are very grateful to him for all his help and advice.¹

Financial backing was generously provided by a variety of sources, in particular the Society of Antiquaries of London, and the Townley Group of the British Museum Friends. The support and good wishes of many others are acknowledged. We are very grateful to the Egypt Exploration Society for the use of the facilities of their Cairo office, and to their representative, Miss Rawya Ismail, for her help and support.

The Mission worked in Luxor from 16–22 September 2002. Members of the mission were: Dr Nigel Strudwick (Field Director) and Dr Tony Waldron (Human Remains specialist).

The purpose of this season was to finish post-excavation work on the finds.

HUMAN REMAINS (TONY WALDRON)

During the final expedition in September 2002, a total of 2,578 bones was identified from the three shafts in the courtyard of the tomb, G, H and I. In addition, two substantial mummies were examined.

The human bones

The majority of the bones (2,013) came from shaft H, with a much smaller number from shaft I (336) and only a very small number from shaft G (19). Each of the bones was identified to anatomical element and where possible an assignment of sex was undertaken. Using the numbers of each type of bone present it was possible to determine the minimum number of individuals recovered from each site. From shaft H at least 25 individuals were present, 22 adults (including 1 immature individual in whom the epiphyses of the long bones were incompletely fused), 2 juveniles (aged between 5 and 15 years of age at death) and 1 fetus. Of the adults, 11 were probably male and 7 female.

Shaft I yielded evidence for 5 adults, 3 females and 2 male, and a single juvenile. It is probable that one of the adult males was Senneferi, but unfortunately it is impossible to identify which.

¹ An online copy of this document is available on the World Wide Web: <http://www.newton.cam.ac.uk/egypt/tt99/report02>. A more popular 'Dig Diary' will be found at <http://www.newton.cam.ac.uk/egypt/tt99/diary02/index.htm>

The remains from Shaft G suggest that they came from 3 individuals, 1 adult, 1 immature individual and 1 fetus.

The mummies

Of the two mummies, one came from shaft H and one from shaft I. The mummy from shaft H consisted of the head, torso and pelvis, the head having been separated from the torso. It was clearly that of the female, judging from the morphology of the pelvis. The mummy from shaft I was female, and substantially complete. The right arm, left upper arm, right pelvis, left leg and foot were covered thickly with a white material that had the appearance and consistency of plaster used for wall covering (Fig. 2). The plaster was also applied to the face and lower jaw and had been sculpted carefully to replicate the lips and chin (Fig. 3). This mummy is unique in my experience and I know of no other examples of this technique being used.

The animal bones

It was not possible to identify the animal bones to species as we had no reference material with which to compare them. The following were represented: cattle (45), bird (74), sheep/goat (20), rodent (58), and single examples of pig, horse and donkey. The rodent bones were almost certainly intrusive, but the remainder presumably represent food offerings. There were some interesting differences in the animals found in two major shafts. In H, bird bones were by far the most common, whereas in I, cattle bones were the most common, and there were very few bird bones. This difference was statistically significant suggesting a real difference in the type of food offerings made for those buried in the two locations.

Pathology

Approximately 300 of the human bones showed evidence of disease or other abnormalities and there was evidence of a considerable degree of dental disease (Fig. 4). The most common condition on the bones was osteoarthritis and there was an unusually high prevalence of osteoarthritis of the atlanto-odontoid joint; it is not clear at present what might have caused this. Several bones with healed fractures were found (Fig. 5), including ribs and vertebrae; there was considerable evidence of inter-vertebral disc disease and there were two cases of spondylolysis of the fifth lumbar vertebra. There was also a single case of meningioma in a male from shaft I. A meningioma is a tumour that arises from the dura mater – the outermost covering of the brain. It does not usually spread to distant sites but if it grows to a large size, it may press on the brain and cause symptoms and sometimes, death. In the case here, the tumour was small in size and almost certainly did not have any adverse effects during life and was certainly not implicated in the death of this individual.

THE FALSE DOOR OF SENNEFERI (NIGEL STRUDWICK)

The General Director of Upper Egypt and Luxor, Mr Mohamed el-Bialely, drew my attention to the fact that work by the Inspectorate on objects stored in TT96A (upper tomb of Sennefer) included a number of granite fragments which might belong to the false door of Senneferi from TT99, parts of which had also been found in the course of clearance work in the courtyard of TT99. I was shown these fragments on 19 September, and permitted to remove to TT99 those which I believed to belong to the false door for storage and study.

A total of 31 granite fragments was removed. On closer examination, six of them proved not to be from the TT99 false door, but it has been possible to join together a number of the remaining 25 and to gain a good impression of the size and shape of the original. Photographs were made of all the fragments and it is hoped that, by adding in the fragments previously recorded, it will be

possible to produce a paper or photographic reconstruction of much of the door, although the original is too broken for it to be possible to restore it physically.

Fig. 6 shows the present state of work on a photographic restoration. The false door would appear to have had three pairs of jambs, at the bottom of each of which was the name of Senneferi. The central panel of the door consisted on a scene of Senneferi adoring Osiris.

The fragments have been stored in a shaft inside TT99.

CONCLUSION

The 2002 season was most successful and saw the completion of work on the tomb. It has taken eleven seasons to examine and study TT99 completely, and the results obtained in all areas of research have been truly remarkable. The SCA, sponsors and all who have worked in the tomb should be congratulated. Work on the publication will now begin in earnest, and I hope, subject to other commitments of the authors, that a monograph will appear in the next few years.

9 December 2002

FIGURES

- 1 TT99, final plan (G. Heindl)
- 2 'Plaster' packed around the tibia of mummy from shaft I
- 3 Mummy from shaft I with 'plaster' applied to face
- 4 Large bone cyst eroding through anterior wall of mandible
- 5 Healed fracture of the humerus
- 6 First attempt at a reconstruction of the false door of Senneferi

Unless indicated, all images are by Helen and Nigel Strudwick



2 'Plaster' packed around the tibia of mummy from shaft I



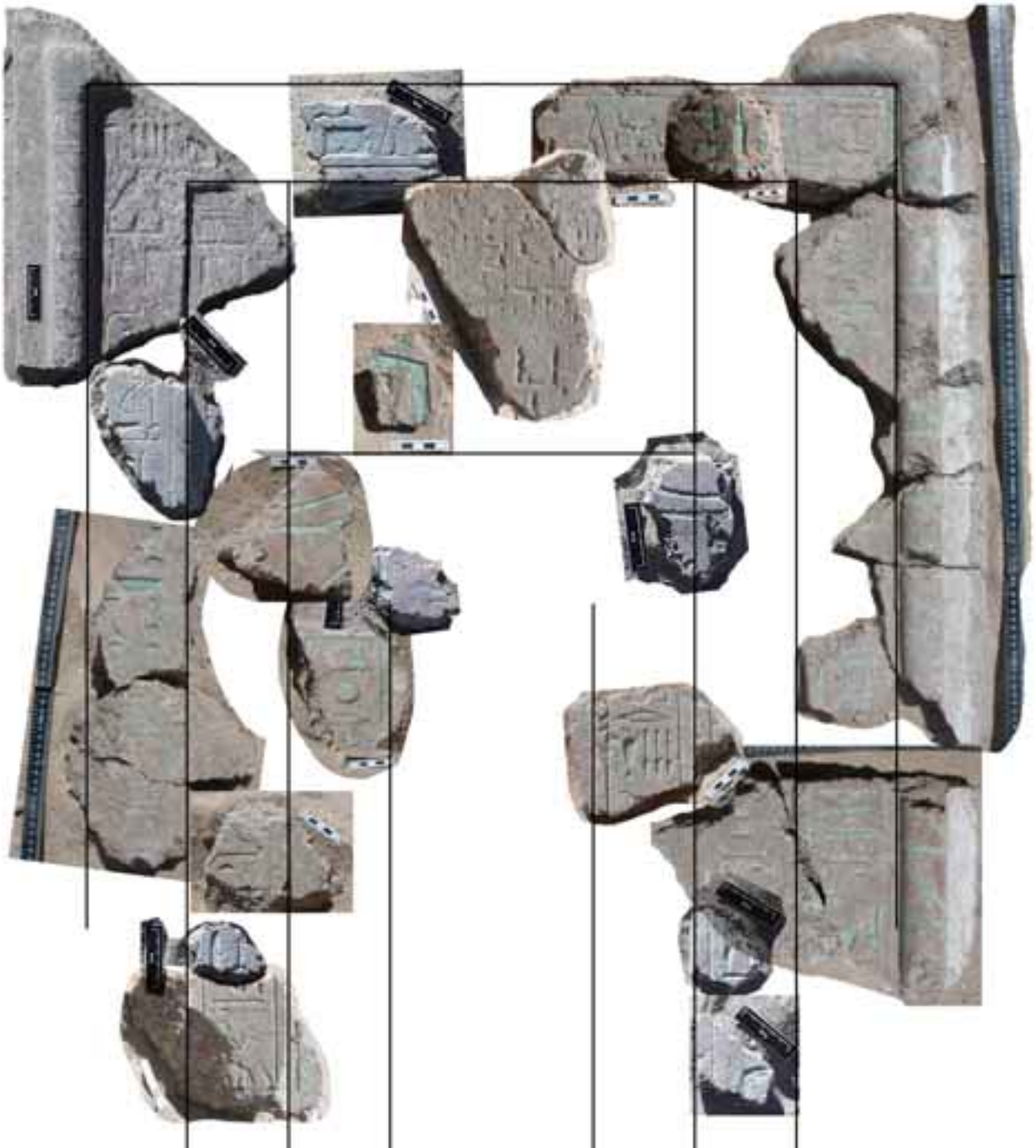
3 Mummy from shaft I with 'plaster' applied to face



4 Large bone cyst eroding through anterior wall of mandible



5 Healed fracture of the humerus



6 First attempt at a reconstruction of the false door of Senneferi