

Tomb of Ramose

One of the most interesting things about Ramose's tomb is the mystery surrounding his social background.



Figure 1:

Panel in the false door of Senemut's tomb, showing him in the middle with his mother Hatnefer (in front of him) and his father Ramose (behind him)

Ramose is featured on the false door of his son Senemut's tomb chapel.

- Ramose was the father of Senemut, one of the most important state officials under the reign of the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut in the 18th dynasty.
- The tombs of Ramose and Hatnefer were found in 1935 at Sheikh Abd el-Qurna in Western Thebes, along with six other anonymous poorly-wrapped mummies, assumed to be family members of the couple.
- While Hatnefer's tomb contains rich funerary goods, Ramose's is comparatively simple, suggesting his commoner roots.
- Although historians cannot be sure if Ramose was a farmer or a minor official, the potential commoner origins of Ramose and the rise of his son Senemut are suggestive of high social mobility in New Kingdom Egypt.

Note:

An ***Egyptologist*** is someone who studies ancient Egyptian history, language, literature, religion, and art.



Figure 2:
A view of Hatnofer's gold gilded funerary mask/cartonnage.

Hatnofer was the mother of Senenmut, the highest serving state official under the Queen Hatshepsut. Her rich funerary goods stand in stark contrast to her husband's simple coffin.

Ramose was the father of *Senenmut*, one of the most important state officials under the reign of the Egyptian *Queen Hatshepsut* in the 18th dynasty of Egypt's New Kingdom.

Ramose and his wife *Hatnofer*, Senenmut's mother, are buried together in a tomb not far from the chapel of their son. One of the most interesting things about his tomb is the mystery surrounding his social background, and whether this father of an important official came from commoner roots.

The tomb was found in 1935 by William Hayes and Ambrose Lansing of the Metropolitan Museum, as they were excavating under a hillside terrace at Sheikh Abd el-Qurna in Western Thebes. Ramose and Hatnofer were buried in the tomb along with six other anonymous poorly-wrapped mummies (three women and three unknown children), who are assumed to be family members of the couple. While it is possible that Senenmut's family had been struck by a sudden tragedy, it is also likely that the family members died at different times and were re-buried to be kept together.

Ramose and Hatnofer's tomb is comparatively simple, and was initially considered by Egyptologists as evidence for the humble personal origins of Ramose in particular. While historians cannot be sure if Ramose was a farmer or a minor official, the potential commoner origins of Ramose and the rise of his son Senenmut are suggestive of high social mobility in New Kingdom Egypt (Figure 0).

The artifacts uncovered in the tomb suggest that Ramose and his wife Hatnofer had distinctly different funerals. The personal possessions in the tomb chamber were Hatnofer's alone, as they were all appropriate for a woman, and included a rich gilded funerary mask (Figure 1), a heart scarab, canopic jars, and papyri. In contrast, Ramose's burial only featured his painted coffin - though its gold fitting implied some social status. While Hatnofer's body had been carefully mummified, Ramose's remains were skeletal. It is assumed that Hatnofer died when her son had already achieved his high state position under Hatshepsut, and was therefore able to provide her with rich funerary goods. Ramose's inferior funerary equipment suggests that Senenmut's position in the Egyptian state must have still been comparatively minor when his father died.

It is possible, however, that the tomb of Ramose was robbed shortly after his burial and that Ramose was reburied with his wife when she died. Again, this makes it hard to pinpoint any social background for Ramose and Senenmut, as it is impossible to make any statements about the quality of his original burial equipment, if any.

Ramose and Hatnofer's tomb is also notable because it suggests the earliest known date for Queen Hatshepsut's reign. The tomb contains a single pottery jar with date "Year 7," along with another jar stamped with the seal of the "God's Wife Hatshepsut." This establishes that Hatshepsut was recognized by her subjects as the pharaoh of Egypt by Year 7 of her reign.

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Page 3 of 4

Hatshepsut is considered one of the most accomplished leaders in Egyptian history and, with this evidence from Ramose's tomb, is believed to have reigned longer than any other woman of an indigenous Egyptian dynasty.

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Page 4 of 4