

# FAIENCE OBJECTS FROM THE TOMB MMA 1152 AT SHEIKH ABD EL-GURNA

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**Abstract:** Excavations in the area of tomb MMA 1152 at Sheikh Abd el-Gurna, conducted since 2003, have uncovered a substantial set of faience objects coming from burials made there during the later Pharaonic Period, before the tomb became a hermitage for Coptic monks. Analysis of the material points to several episodes of reuse of the original Middle Kingdom structure in the Third Intermediate Period and the Late Period.

**Keywords:** Sheikh Abd el-Gurna, Third Intermediate Period, Late Period, burial, mummy, faience, amulets, shabtis, bead-nets

The rock-cut tomb MMA 1152 is located in an unnamed hill behind Sheikh Abd el-Gurna in West Thebes, south of the valley with an unfinished royal tomb complex of the late Eleventh–early Twelfth Dynasty. In 2003, Polish archaeologists started working in this area (Górecki 2004).

The tomb was constructed in the Middle Kingdom, for an official related to the king who had planned a tomb nearby. It is not clear whether it was ever finished and the owner buried in it. The assemblage of finds from the fill of the shaft and outside it dated to later periods, indicating that the tomb was reused repeatedly for burial purposes in the later Pharaonic Period before being turned into a hermitage for Coptic monks in the 5th century AD (Szapkowska 2007; Górecki and Szpakowska 2008: 307–309).










Among the artifacts from recent excavations in the courtyard and inside the

tomb was a large number of faience objects belonging to dynastic funerary equipment, including a heart amulet, mummy plaques and bead-nets, shabti figurines and amulets.


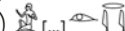



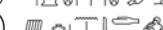
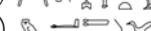

## HEART AMULET

The debris accumulated in the courtyard of the tomb yielded fragments of human mummies and animal bones, and among them an amulet in the form of a heart (*Fig. 1*; see Górecki and Szpakowska 2008: 309, Fig. 6). Made of blue faience, it is inscribed on both sides with the Chapter 30B of the Book of the Dead. Such amulets are a variant of the more common heart scarabs (Malaise 1978: 37; see Wessetzky 1980). The broken upper part of this amulet contained the name of the owner. It was lost probably when robbers pulled the amulet from the mummy. The preserved fragment of the text goes as follows:

Obverse (convex side):

1. (→) 
2. (→) 
3. (→) 
4. (→) 
5. (→) 
6. (→) 
7. (→) 
8. (→) 
9. (→) 

Reverse (flat side):

10. (→) 
11. (→) 
12. (→) 
13. (→) 
14. (→) 
15. (→) 
16. (→) 
17. (→) 

Translation:

- (1) Osiris [NN says:]
- (2) O, my heart which I had from my mother! O my heart which I had from my mother! [O, my heart]
- (3) of my different ages! Do not stand up against me
- (4) as a witness. Do not be opposed to me in the tribunal.
- (5) Do not be hostile to me in the presence of the keeper of the balance.
- (6) You are my *ka* which is in my body,
- (7) Khnum who revives my limbs.
- (8) Go forth to happiness,
- (9) transport us there.
- (10) [...] my
- (11) [...] who created
- (12) mankind.
- (13) Do not speak lies against me beside

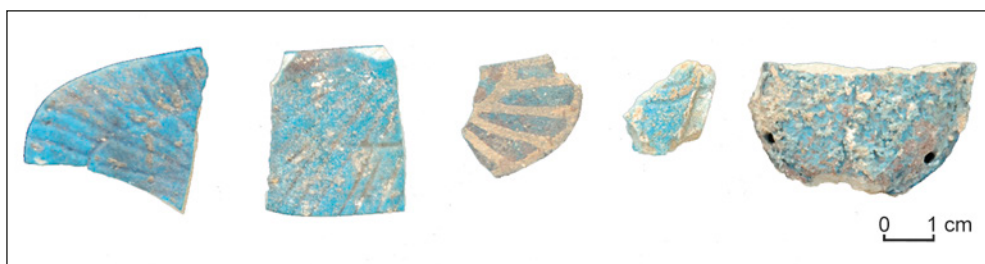
- (14) the god. This will be good for us, this will be good for the judge,
- (15) and the heart will rejoice at the announcement of judgment.
- (16) See, you will be selected
- (17) to exist.

### MUMMY PLAQUES AND BEAD-NETS

In the late Third Intermediate Period and early Late Period faience winged scarabs were commonly placed on the mummy, usually incorporated into the bead netting, conveying the identification of the deceased with the reborn sun god (Cooney 2008: 2, Fig. 4). Preserved fragments of the scarabs, discovered during the work in MMA 1152, include parts of clypeus and elytra (Newberry 1906: 70–72, Fig. 58). The fill also contained fragments of faience wings [Fig. 2]. They were once attached to scarabs, or to figures of the goddess Nut, though the latter possibility remains hypothetical, given that no pieces that can be attributed to the body of the goddess have been found thus far. Sets of faience mummy plaques, composed of three elements placed on a mummy one above the other (from the top down: scarab, Nut, and four Sons of Horus) probably appeared as early as the Ramesside Period, but were especially popular in the Third Intermediate Period (early examples are three similar sets, coming probably from one workshop at Tuna el-Gebel: Berlin ÄMP Nos 12629–12634 [Ćwiek 2005: Fig. 87], British Museum EA 26228–EA 26230 [Shaw and Nicholson 1995: 275]; Eton College ECM 817 a–c, 1478 a–c, 1593–1596 [Spurr, Reeves, and Quirke 1999: 42–43]). Starting with the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, they might have been attached to the bead-nets, at first only the



*Fig. 1. Heart amulet, obverse and reverse  
(Photos E. Szpakowska)*



*Fig. 2. Fragments of wings from scarabs  
(Photos P. Chudzik)*



*Fig. 3. Fragments of mummy plaques/amulets representing the Sons of Horus  
(Photos P. Chudzik)*



Fig. 4. Fragmentary mummy plaque representing jackal-headed Duamutef (Photo E. Szpakowska)



Fig. 5. Head of a shabti statuette (Photo P. Chudzik)



Fig. 6. Openwork amulet representing a falcon-headed god (Photo E. Szpakowska)

winged scarabs and the Sons of Horus; amuletic figures of the goddess Nut were added on the nets in the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (Taylor 2001: 207). This tripartite arrangement reflected the structure of the resurrection space: sons of Horus at the bottom, as the deities connected with the mummification and care of the internal organs; the goddess Nut in the intermediary position, reflecting her role of the mother of the deceased identified with Osiris, protecting him/her and giving rebirth, which in turn led to emergence into a new life in the solar sphere that was represented by a winged scarab in the uppermost register.

No pieces that might be attributed to Nut figures were recorded, but a number of fragments of faience plaques representing Sons of Horus were found during the work in tomb 1152 [Figs 3, 4]. Since the Eighteenth Dynasty the stoppers of canopic jars were shaped into the heads of the four Sons of Horus. The human-headed Imsety usually protected the liver, the ape-headed Hapy guarded the lungs, the jackal-headed Duamutef protected the stomach and the falcon-headed Qebehsenuef cared for the intestines. Modification of mummification practices in the Third Intermediate Period resulted in the embalmed internal organs no longer being put into canopic jars, being placed instead back in the body cavity. This explains the incorporation of the Sons of Horus as figures on the mummy coverings (Petrie 1917: 3; Andrews 1994: 45–46). Plaques representing the four Sons of Horus were placed on the chest or stomach of the mummy (Petrie 1914: 39–40), arranged in two pairs facing each other. Usually Imsety and Duamutef on the left faced Qebehsenuef and Hapy on the right.

During the excavations hundreds of faience beads were found, coming from nets once covering wrapped bodies of the deceased. Such nets appeared first in the Third Intermediate Period, and were in use on a regular basis from the Twenty-fifth Dynasty to the Ptolemaic Period (Taylor 2001: 206). From the Theban Necropolis are known mostly faience bead-nets representing type A according to Flora Silvano's typology (Silvano 1980: 84–88, Figs 1–6; see Aston 2009: 290, Table 5). It is characterized by the presence of aforementioned sets of winged scarabs, winged Nut, and Sons of Horus figures. Bead-nets of this type covered the torso and sometimes the legs of the mummy.

It may be assumed that more than one set of mummy plaques and related bead-nets came from the burials in MMA 1152, dated to the Twenty-fifth–Twenty-sixth Dynasty. Some of the fragments of the plaques found during excavation of the fill inside and outside the tomb bore traces of fire. It gives cause to think that the mummies and funerary equipment were burned by robbers in the dynastic period or by the Coptic monks.

#### SHABTI FIGURINES

A number of the finds represented the category of faience shabti statuettes [Fig. 5]. The inventory encompassed two groups of figurines. The first one consisted of eight fragments of shabtis with arms crossed. They had solid unpainted wigs bound by a headband and no beard. Facial details were modeled and only the eyes and eyebrows were painted. Black ink was noted on one fragment of feet. This group represents Hans Schneider's types H1–H5, H15, I1–I2, W33 and David Aston's

type E (Schneider 1977: 167–170; Aston 2009: 357–358).

The figurines of the second group, also with arms crossed, had smooth bodies. Wigs were plain and remains of a black-ink headband were preserved. The details of the face were modeled, but have not been preserved well. Beards were present. Six fragments of such figurines were found. This group represents Schneider's types H17, W34–W35 and Aston's type G (Schneider 1977: 167–168; Aston 2009: 357–359).

These two groups of faience shabtis can be dated to the Third Intermediate Period and to the Late Period.

A large number of clay shabti figurines were also found during recent work at the tomb MMA 1152.

#### FALCON-HEADED DEITY AMULET

Another object of the faience inventory is a small openwork shrine amulet of blue faience, depicting a seated falcon-headed god holding the ostrich feather of Maat [Fig. 6]. The god is wearing a wig and the symbols of the moon disk (supplied with a centrally placed uraeus) and a moon crescent on his head. The iconography identifies the god as Khonsu. A vertical suspension loop is present on the reverse.

Similar openwork faience amulets of this quality are dated mostly to the later Eighteenth Dynasty, but a date in the Ramesside Period and even the Third Intermediate Period cannot be excluded. Amulets representing Khonsu as a falcon-headed god are known from the later dynasties (Wilkinson 2003: 114, for parallels, see, e.g., Fischer 1977: 34, Fig. 35 and No. 91).

## CONCLUSIONS

The presented material is typical 'middle class' funerary equipment that can be dated to the Third Intermediate Period and the Late Period. It indicates the probable date

of reuse of the Middle Kingdom structures in the MMA 1152 complex. The precise dating, and whether this happened as a single event, or several times, remains to be established.

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