

Shabtis of Egyptian Officers from the Late Period in the Collections of the Institute of Classical Archaeology in Prague

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ABSTRACT

The Institute of Classical Archaeology in Prague hosts a small collection of Egyptian antiquities. It includes four funerary figurines, termed “shabtis” in Egyptian archaeology, that originate in the funerary equipment of two Egyptian officers of the Late Period (715–332 BCE) – Padihorenpet and Nekawnebpehty.

KEYWORDS

Shabtis; Late Period Egypt; ancient Egyptian military.

INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Classical Archaeology, Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, hosts a small but highly interesting collection of Egyptian antiquities comprising several dozens of objects (cf. DUFKOVÁ – ONDŘEJOVÁ eds. 2006, 141–143). The collection mainly includes bronze statuettes,¹ terracotta figurines (SMOLÁRIKOVÁ 2010, cat. nos. 4, 15, 23, 38, 39 and 55), amulets made of Egyptian faïence,² and last but not least shabtis (ONDERKA *et al.* 2003, 157). No records of how the shabtis became part of the Institute’s collection are currently available.

A *shabti* ([š3btj], *shawabty* [š3w3btj], or *ushabti* [wšbtj]) is a type of ancient Egyptian funerary figurine, which developed during the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2055–1650 BCE) from models of funerary estates and funerary statues. During the New Kingdom (ca. 1543–1069 BCE), their numbers rose from a couple to over 400 in each set of funerary equipment (365 for each day of the year, 36 foremen for each *decan* [a ten day period] and several scribes and “managing staff”). They continued to be used until the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 BCE; MILDE 2012, 3). Their main purpose was to perform the duties (mostly agricultural works) on behalf of the deceased in the afterlife. In the earlier periods shabtis also performed duties of junior family members towards the deceased. Shabtis often wore an inscription which included the identification of the owner, usually appended with other genealogical information (names of parents). Some shabtis were even inscribed with the Spell 6 of the Book of the Dead, also called the “shabti spell”. In the earlier periods shabtis were made of wax, wood, a variety of stones, Egyptian

- 1 Among the bronzes, there is a statuette of Imhotep discovered in the course of the excavations of the Czechoslovak expedition at Kyme directed by Antonín Salač (1885–1960). The statuette of Imhotep was discovered in the Temple of Isis at Kyme, Asia Minor (VERNER 1974, 173–174), along with other Egyptian antiquities, including a faïence amulet in form of Thot (VERNER 1974, 174) and a shabti for the Overseer of Both Granaries Psamtek, son of Neferibre-ankh and Tasenetenhor (LEXA 1927; VERNER 1974, 174–175).
- 2 The most interesting amulet is that in the shape of the anthropomorphic form of the Apis bull, i.e. a bull-headed walking man (Inv. No. 58–305) dated to the Late Period.

faïence or even bronze. During the 1st millennium BCE (except for the 25th Dynasty, i.e. 715–664 BCE), Egyptian faïence was the predominant material.

ANALYSIS

Five shabtis from among the set in the possession of the Institute of Classical Archaeology (**Pl. 2/1, Fig. 1**) belonged to overseers of the army (*jmy-r3 mšꜥw*) of the Late Period (715–332 BCE; cf. FISCHER-BOVET 2008, 314–315). The term of “overseer of the army” is equated either with the modern rank of a general, or an officer (specifically during the inter-Persian period, i.e. 28th–30th Dynasties, 404–341 BCE; e.g. SCHLÖGL – BRODBECK 1990). One shabti (No. 1) belonged to the funerary equipment of the Overseer of the Army Padihorenpe (*p3-dj-hrw-n-p*); three (Nos. 2–4) belonged to the funerary equipment of the Overseer of the Army Nekawnebpehty (*n-k3w-nb-ph.ty*), and one to another officer of this rank whose identity is a matter of discussion (No.5).

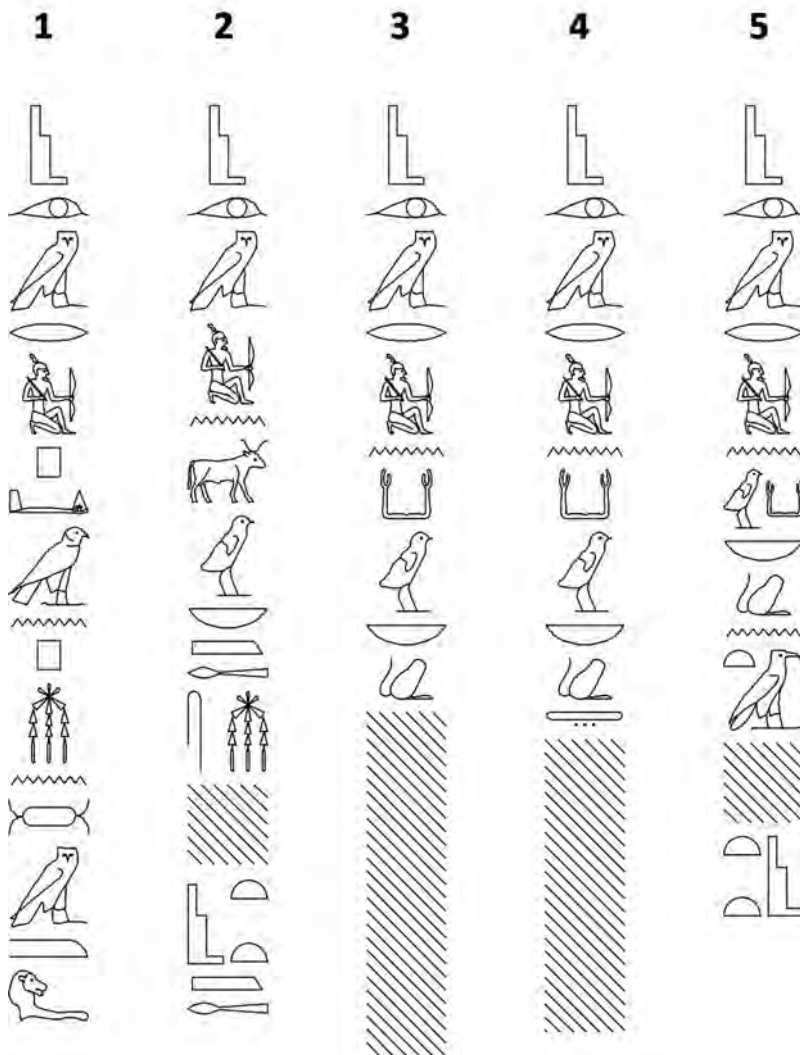


Fig. 1: The inscriptions on shabtis nos 1–5.

SHABTI FOR THE OVERSEER OF THE ARMY PADIHORENPE

The shabti for Padihorenpe was formed by moulding; tools were used for the subsequent finishing of the surface and for the details. Other specimens from the set are known from other collections (e.g. Museo Archeologico, Milano, Inv. Nos. E o. 9. 40173–40176; LISE 1979, 57, Cat. Nos. 875–876, Table 444).

The theophorous name of the owner is related to Horus of Buto, i.e. a city located on the Sebennyitic arm of the Nile in the Delta. The preserved onomastics hence indicates Lower Egyptian origin of its owner. Besides the name of the deceased, the text inscribed on the frontal part of the shabti also includes the name of the deceased's mother, Neitemhat.

A general named Padihorenpe (son of Padiشههد) is known from a block statue kept in the collection of the National Archaeological Museum in Athens (Inv. No. 3), dated to Year 30 of Psamtek I, i.e. 634 BCE. However, the present shabti seems to be of a later date.

No. 1. Shabti for Padihorenpe

Classification: Type XI-A-5, W35b, H30 (most likely intended as H4), I8, B26a, T_p7a³

Name: Padihorenpe (RPN does not list the name; "The One Who Was Given by Horus of Pe" (i.e. Buto)

Title: overseer of the army (*jmj-r3 mšꜥ*)

Family: mother: Neitemhat (*nt-m-h3t*; RPN I: 182.1)

Dimensions: h. 118 mm, w. 30 mm, pedestal d. 23 mm, pedestal w. 22 mm

Material: Egyptian faïence, green-glazed

Technique: formed by moulding, subsequent refining of surface

Surface treatment and decoration: crude modelling, coarse face, low pilaster, large pedestal

Text: deep incised cursive hieroglyphs; one column of text placed on the front part of the pilaster:

wsjr (j)m(y)-r3 p3-dj-hrw-n-p ms n nt-m-h3t

Osiris, Overseer of the Army Padihorenpe born to Neitemhat

Provenance: Lower Egypt

Dating: Late Period, 26th Dynasty (664–525 BCE)

Condition: good

Bibliography: ONDERKA *et al.* 2003, 157, Cat. No. 161.

SHABTIS FOR THE OVERSEER OF THE ARMY NEKAWNEBPEHTY

There are four more shabtis in the texts of which the title of an overseer of the army (*jmy-r3 mšꜥw*) appears. Three of them with all certainty belonged to the funerary equipment of General Nekawnebpehty (Nos. 2–4); the identity of the owner of the last shabti (No. 5) is a matter of discussion, even though it is very probable that it also belonged to the very same funerary equipment. Two shabtis out of four (Nos. 2 and 5) are completely preserved, while in the case of the other two specimens (Nos. 3 and 4) the lower parts are broken off and missing. The general appearance of all four shabtis is identical; the difference lies, above all, in the rendering of the texts inscribed on the back pilaster of the shabtis. All the shabtis were formed by moulding; tools were used for the subsequent finishing of the surface and for the details.

3 Classification outlined in SCHNEIDER 1977 is used in the present paper.

The reading of the final part of the owner's name is uncertain, but no other basiliphorous name referring to Necho II (ruled 595–598 BCE) or his grandfather, in the form *nk3w-nb-...* is known (LEAHY 2011).

The name suggests a Lower Egyptian location of the overseer, as “Saite basiliphorous names [...] are comparatively rare in Upper Egypt” (LEAHY 2011, 559). The general might have been either a contemporary of Necho II or lived in the times following his reign. Basiliphorous names were frequently adopted by foreigners (Greeks) in the service of the Saite pharaohs (LEAHY 2011, 560).

An individual named Nekawnebpehty, father of Wahibre and husband of Merpath(iot)es is attested from a bronze figurine of Neith and Horus allegedly from Sais (EL-SAYED 1982, 468; LEAHY 2011, 556, No. 15).

The name of the overseer's mother is preserved only on the complete specimen (No. 2). The name begins with *B* (G1 and X1 signs are written in graphic transposition) followed by four broad signs, the reading of which is not certain. The final part of the name consists of three signs forming the name of the goddess Isis (Q1 – a throne; X1 – a loaf of bread; H8 – an egg). The name most likely belongs to the type of theophorous names of the following pattern *t3-{\\$rjt}-[n]-3st*, with *{\\$rjt}* serving as an example.

The texts on the three shabtis positively ascribed to Nekawnebpehty (Nos. 2–4) differ slightly from each other, indicating that they might have come from two different series. The difference may be best seen in the rendering of the name of Nekaw, which is in one case written N35:(D28*G43) (No. 2), in the other N35:D28:G43 (Nos. 3 and 4).

Nos. 2–4 Shabtis for Nekawnebpehty

Classification: Type XI-C, W35b, H4, I8, B26c, Tp13b

Name: Nakaunephty (*nk3w-nb-ph[ty]*); “Nekaw is the Possessor of Strength”⁴

Title: overseer of the army (*jmj-r3 mšc*)

Family – Mother: *t3-{\dots}-[nt]-3st* (cf. (RPN III: 12))

Dimensions: (No. 2) h. 86 mm, w. 24 mm, pedestal d. 20 mm, pedestal w. 19 mm

(No. 3) h. 61+ mm, w. 26 mm, d. 15+ mm

(No. 4) h. 57+ mm, w. 24 mm, d. 16+ mm

Material: Egyptian faïence, green-glazed

Technique: formed by moulding, subsequently refined surface

Surface treatment and decoration: crude modelling, coarse face, low pilaster, small pedestal

Text: deep incised cursive hieroglyphs; one column of text placed on the back pilaster (No. 2):

wsjr (j)m(j)-r3 mšcw nk3w-nb-ph[.ty] m3c hrw ms n t3-...-3st, m3c hrw

The Osiris, Overseer of the Army Nakaunepht[ty], justified born to Ta-??-ase, justified

Provenance: unknown

Dating: late Late Period, probably 30th Dynasty

Condition: good

Bibliography: Unpublished.

⁴ RPN does not list the name; however, it lists similarly patterned basiliphorous names of the same period, e.g. *psmtk-nb-ph[ty]* (RPN 136.19).

Shabti No. 5

As already stated above, the fourth shabti (No. 5) shares characteristics with the previous three. However, there are major differences between the texts. For the sake of comparison the text on No. 5 shall be discussed in detail below.

No. 5 Shabti, possibly for overseer of the army Nekawnebpehty (?)

Classification: Type XI-C, W35b, H4, I8, B26c, Tp13b

Name: Nakaunebpehty (*nk3w-nb-ph̄ty*) (?)

Title: overseer of the army (*jmj-r3 mš̄c*)

Family – Mother: *t3-{...}-[nt]-3st* (cf. RPN III: 12)

Dimensions: h. 86 mm, w. 24 mm, pedestal d. 20 mm, pedestal w. 19 mm

Material: Egyptian faïence, green-glazed

Technique: formed by moulding, subsequently refined surface

Surface treatment and decoration: crude modelling, coarse face, low pilaster, small pedestal

Text: cf. below

Provenance: unknown

Dating: late Late Period, probably 30th Dynasty

Condition: good

Bibliography: Unpublished.

Text

wsjr

The text on the fourth shabti begins with the epithet “Osiris” (*wsjr*).

jmj[-r3] šm̄c̄w

It is followed by the military title “Overseer of the Army” (*jmj-r3 šm̄c̄w*). In the spelling of the title the D21 sign (*r3*) is omitted.

n-k3w-

Unlike in the case of the previous three shabtis, the name of Nekaw is written using the E1 sign (a bull), instead of a D28 (two arms, an ideogram for the *k3*-soul). Leahy in his study on ‘Necho’ in *Late Period Personal Names* states that the use of either spelling was – as a rule – consistent and that there was only a single inscription, namely a fragment from The British Museum (Inv. No. EA 65905), in which both spellings occur (LEAHY 2011, 563). However, alternating of different spellings of private names on individual pieces of funerary equipment or within the decoration of the tombs is relatively well attested (BAREŠ – SMOLÁRIKOVÁ 2008, 91–96; COPPENS – SMOLÁRIKOVÁ 2009, 39–43).

-nb-[ph̄.ty] m3̄c̄ hrw

The name of Nekaw is followed by the V30 sign (basket, i.e. *nb*) and two broad signs, which the present writer interprets as the epithet *m3̄c̄-hrw* (i.e. “justified”). It is noteworthy that the names on the three previous shabtis (Nos. 2–4) are not accompanied by this epithet. It appears that the F9 sign (leopard head) is omitted in the name of the overseer. An alternative reading for the two broad signs could be *t3.wy* (two N17 signs), hence the name being *n-k3w-nb-t3.wy*, which is however not otherwise attested.

ms n

The name of the parent is preceded by the standard phrase *ms n* (“born to”), which as a rule introduces the name of the mother.

Following the phrase, the name of the mother shall appear. Despite the fact that the signs forming her name are only partly legible, it is apparent that the names on No. 2 and No. 5 differ from each other, either in their spelling or entirely.

The beginning of the parent’s name on No. 5 is written on the bottom of the back pilaster and it continues under the shabti’s feet. Two tall-broad signs in the shape of birds (placed next to each other) are followed by two X1 signs (a loaf of bread) or an X1 sign and an H8 sign (an egg), placed in front of the Q1 sign (a throne). While the first bird may stand for *t3*, the second may stand for a substantive written using a sign of Gardiner’s group G, i.e. birds. The final part reads Isis. The name *t3-b3k(.t)-n(t)-3s.t* (RPN I: 356.3) may serve as an example for such a name.

Both names from Nos. 2 and 5 seem to share the basic grammatical structure *t3-*(feminine noun)-*n(.t)-3s.t*; however, it is not possible to state if they are identical.

Even though it is highly improbable, the mother’s name could have been erratically replaced by that of the father. A male name, Harsiese (*hrw-s3-3st*; RPN I: 250.13) could serve as a suitable option.

m3^c hrw

The inscription is concluded by the epithet *m3^c hrw* (“justified”) of the parent of the deceased.

CONCLUSIONS

Shabtis belong among the most represented type of Egyptian antiquities in both larger and smaller collections. As they were – following the New Kingdom – mass produced for over a millennium, hundreds of thousands of shabtis are distributed all around the globe. Quite often specimens belonging to one owner may be found in geographically and historically distant collections.

The collection of the Institute of Classical Archaeology holds *inter alia* five shabtis of Late Period generals. One funerary figurine is ascribed to the Overseer of the Army Padihorenepe and three (or possibly four) to the Overseer of the Army Nekawnebpehty. Both officers are very little known personalities of the Late Period, most likely of Lower Egyptian origin, as indicated by the preserved onomastics of their names. Holders of the title “Overseer of the Army” are frequently found among the shabti owners from the late Late Period, especially from the 30th Dynasty, when the title appears to receive different content (cf. SCHLÖGL – BRODBECK 1990; SCHNEIDER 1977).

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Pl. 2/1: Shabtis from the collection of the Institute of Classical Archaeology, Prague: nos 1-5.