



SHABTI OF KING'S MOTHER TASHERETENESE

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ABSTRACT: A shabti of Tasheretene, mother of King Amasis of the late Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, was recently identified in the collections of the National Museum – Náprstek Museum, Prague. The shabti belongs to the class of larger shabtis of the Late Period inscribed with the Chapter Six of the Book of the Dead. The text on the shabti provides the name of Tasheretene's father, Iretheriru.

KEY WORDS: Ancient Egypt – Amasis – Ahmose II – Twenty-Sixth Dynasty – Shabtis

Introduction

Among the hundreds of funerary figurines termed in Egyptian archaeology as *shabtis* (or *ushebtis*) kept currently in the collections of the National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, there are several specimens originating from sets of funerary equipment of Egyptian kings or members of royal families. As most of the royal shabtis were identified relatively recently, the present paper will at first focus on giving an overview of this specific type of objects in the Museum's Egyptian collection and at second on providing the description of the most recently identified specimen belonging to the King's Mother Tasheretene of the late Twenty-Sixth Dynasty (664–525 BCE).

Royal Shabtis in the Collection of the Náprstek Museum

Five shabtis from the collection (Inv. Nos. P 1705–1708, P 1710; Mynářová – Onderka [eds.] 2007: 256) come from the tomb of Sethi I (reigned circa 1290–1279 BCE in the Valley of the Kings (KV 17). They were, with all probability, excavated by Giuseppe Battista Belzoni (1778–1823) who sold them to Franz Wilhelm Sieber (1789–1844), who in 1818 organized the first (selling) Egyptian exhibition in Prague. In the course of time, the original owners who purchased them from the exhibition donated the pieces to the

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Museum of the Bohemian Kingdom (the later National Museum) from where they were transferred to the newly created Ancient Near East and Africa Department within the Náprstek Museum in 1969.

Another set of six 'royal' shabtis originate from the Royal Cache at Deir el-Bahri (DB 320). The figurines belonged to the funerary equipments of the family of the Theban High Priests of Amun, namely to the King's Wife Henuttawy (Inv. No. P 6302), the Divine Adoratrice Maatkare (Inv. No. P 6303), to Tayuheret (Inv. No. P 6293), to the High Priest of Amun Pinodjem II (Inv. No. P 6307), his consort Nesykhonsu (Inv. No. P 6341) and to the King's Son Djedptahiufankh (Inv. No. P 6305; Mynářová – Onderka [eds.] 2007: 290–291; Mynářová – Onderka – Podhorný – Vrtal 2013: 30–34) of the Twenty-First to Twenty-Second Dynasties (ca. 1069–715 BCE). The six shabtis formed a part of the original collection of the Archduke Joseph Ferdinand von Österreich-Toskana (1872–1942), who visited Egypt in 1903 and purchased an entire collection originally assembled by an Austro-Hungarian consul stationed in Cairo. The collection was initially housed in the museum the Archduke established a couple of years after his return from Egypt in Olomouc, Moravia. From there, the collection was transferred to the Náprstek Museum in 1981 (Mynářová – Onderka – Podhorný – Vrtal 2013: 9–14).

Only recently another shabti of an ancient Egyptian royal family member was identified in the collection, namely a fainece shabti of Tasheretenese (Fig. 1),² queen-mother of King Amasis (Inv. No. P 1729; Onderka 2011: 36, Cat. No. 54). The shabti formed a part of a collection assembled by Ignaz Pallme (1807–1877), a native of Kamenický Šenov (Steinschönau in German), Bohemia, who lived in Egypt and the Sudan in the 1830s and brought back to Bohemia a numerous collection of smaller Egyptian and Nubian antiquities.

Shabti of the King's Mother Tasheretenese

Of the shabti inscribed for the King's Mother Tasheretenese only the upper part is preserved. The dimensions of the shabti's torso are: h. 13.1 cm; w. 5.2 cm, d. 3.4 cm. The lower part from the knees' height down is entirely missing. The shabti belongs to the class of larger shabtis of the Late Period inscribed with the Chapter Six of the Book of the Dead (Schneider's³ Type XI-A-2). The shabti was made of light-green glazed Egyptian faience with matte finish. Hieroglyphs are finely executed. The figurine's shape is mummiform, with sleeved arms crossed right over left (Schneider's type H5). The rather oblong face is set into the striated tripartite wig with ears shown above the hair (Schneider's type W 37). The details of the face are carefully executed; however, the nose and the mouth are broken off. The cheeks are high. The chin is adorned with a finely plaited Osiridian beard. In both hands, the figurine holds agricultural implements which are executed in raised relief. On the right hand the shabti holds a pick and in its left a hoe (Schneider's type I7). Its right hand holds a strap attached to a seed bag which hangs over its left shoulder (Schneider's type B25b). The mummified body of the shabti was inscribed with a number of lines of hieroglyphic text (Fig. 2) out of which only four entirely and one partly are preserved.

² The King's Mother's name has been spelled differently by different authors, e.g. *Ta-sherit-n-Isit* (GLR IV:128), *Tacherenèse* (De Meulenaere 1968), Tasheretenese (The British Museum; <http://www.britishmuseum.org>), etc.

³ Classification of the shabti according to Schneider 1977.



Fig. 1 The shabti for Tasheretenese.

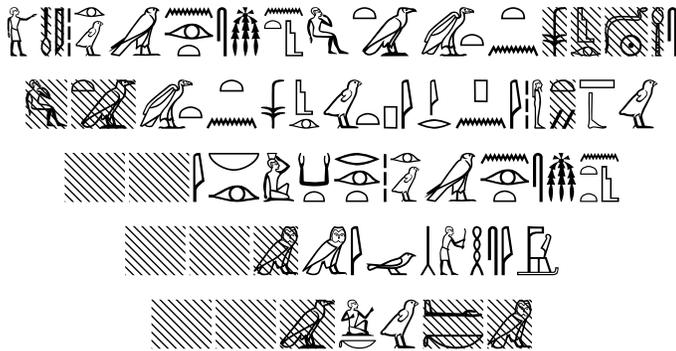


Fig. 2 Transcription of text from the shabti of Tasheretenese.

Text on the shabti

The text consists of two parts. The first part, which takes up almost the entire first line, represent the identification of the deceased. It gives her epithets ('Sehedj' and 'Osiris'), her title and name, followed by the name and epithet ('justified') of her father. The second part, the first two signs of which are located at the end of the first line, represents the Chapter Six of the Book of the Dead in which the identification of the deceased is repeated (this time without the 'Sehedj' epithet of the Tasheretenese and the epithet of her father.



[*shd wsjr*] *mwt nswt t3-šrjt-n-3st m3^c(t) ms n jrt-ḥrw-jrw m3^c ḥrw j*
 Sehedj, Osiris, the King's Mother Tasheretenese, born to Iretheriru, justified. Oh,



wšbty jpn jp.tw wsjr mwt nswt [t3-šrjt-]
 this shabti, if one counts Osiris, the King's Mother Tasheret-



-n-3st ms n jrt-ḥrw-jrw r jrt k3t nbt jr(rt) j[m m]
 -enese, born to Iretheriru, to do every work which is wont to be done there in



hrt ntr jst ḥw sdb(w) jm ...
 the god's domain. Now indeed obstacles are implanted therewith ...



... [m]k wj k3[.tn] ...
 ... 'here I am' you shall say ...

King's Mother Tasheretenese

Most of our knowledge about King Amasis (or Ahmose II; reigned 570–526 BCE) of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty is derived from the narratives of Herodotus (*Herodotus* 2.161ff) and Diodorus Siculus (*Diodorus* 1.60ff). According to the Greek historians, Amasis was a military officer who seized the throne from Apries (reigned 589–570 BCE) following an Egyptian army's unsuccessful invasion of Cyrene. The official Egyptian account of events relating to the struggle for power between Apries and Amasis may be found in the so-called Elephantine Stela of Amasis (Daressy 1900; etc.). The Greek sources are however terse when it comes to the family of Amasis. Herodotus informs us that Amasis was of common origin (*Herodotus* 2.172) and that he married Ladiké (*Herodotus* 2.181). More light on the king's family background is shed by Egyptian texts.

Relevant Egyptian texts were analyzed by Herman De Meulenaere (1923–2011) in his study "La Famille du Roi Amasis" in 1968 (De Meulanaere 1968). In the introduction to his study he concluded: *Il est regrettable qu'aucun document ne nous ait révélé jusqu'à présent le nom du père d'Amasis. En revanche, Daressy a signalé, il y a bien des années, une 'pierre carrée en granite noir' où apparaît le nom d'une dame Tacherenèse (t3-šrjt-n-3st)* (De Meulanaere 1968: 143). Despite our absolute ignorance concerning Amasis' father, we know much about the identity of Amasis' mother.

Tasheretenese was titled either 'King's Mother' or 'Mother of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt' (*mwt nswt bjty*; inscription on the torso of her statue now kept in The British Museum, Inv. No. EA775; *PM* VIII: 748, 801–780–070; De Meulenaere 1968: Pl. XXIX, 1).

Conclusion

The above mentioned square stone ('pierre carrée') which was discovered at Mehallet el-Kobra in the Delta (between Tanta and Mansoura) had provided us also with the name of Tasheretenese's mother, Tanetmut (*t3-nt-mwt*; Daressy 1900: 142–143; *GLR* IV: 128). The relevant section of the inscription from Mehallet el-Korba gives the name of Tasheretenese followed by the epithet 'justified' (*m3^c hrw*), which indicates the funerary context of the inscription.⁴ The name of Tasheretenese's father remained generally unknown for the following century.⁵ Inscriptions on the shabtis for Tasheretenese are so far the only known attestations for the name of Amasis's maternal grandfather, Iretheriru, and fill in a gap in the pedigree of the last two kings of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, Amasis and Psamtek III.

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⁴ The fragment may originate from Tasheretenese's sarcophagus.

⁵ For example, Günther Vittmann in his summarizing study on the royal family of the Twenty-Six Dynasty stated that her father is unknown (Vittmann 1975: 380).

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