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Note on an Enigmatic Shabti Form

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previous owners. Therefore, the figure was submitted to F. Richardson, a very experienced wood anatomist and then technician at the Jodrell Laboratory, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. He reported that the shabti was juniper wood (*Juniperus* species). It was not possible to be sure of the species of juniper.

The following species occur in the eastern Mediterranean region:¹⁰ Phoenician or brown-berried juniper (*Juniperus phoenicea*), found in dry situations such as at Petra, where I have seen trees on the rocky hills above the tombs; the prickly juniper, (*J. oxycedrus*), which is only a shrub and has a wide distribution in the Mediterranean area; and the eastern savin, (*J. excelsa*), which I have seen growing with *J. drupacea* on Mount Lebanon. Both of the latter are sizeable trees. Plate XXV, 2 shows photomicrographs of thin sections of the widespread temperate common juniper (*Juniperus communis*). These are typical of the cellular structure of junipers, and, indeed of conifers in general, since they have for the most part a close similarity.

Richardson also reported that the timber showed collapsed cells and vessels consistent with very ancient timber, perhaps dating to the time of Sethos I. Therefore, this shabti can be added to the limited but growing number of examples of identified juniper wood from ancient Egypt.¹¹

F. NIGEL HEPPER

Note on an enigmatic shabti form

Discussion of a type of shabti with three arms, combining the traits of worker and overseer.

AMONG shabtis of Twenty-first Dynasty date one sometimes finds a rare aberrant type having two arms crossed over the chest with the hands grasping hoes, and a third arm by the side. Most, perhaps all, of the examples are from Deir el-Bahari. Because of their rough, mass-produced forms they seem often to have been regarded as botched, their oddities being left unremarked. J.-F. Aubert¹ has, however, suggested an attempted interconversion of two types: (a) the mummiform worker-shabti with a hoe in each hand and (b) the overseer holding a whip in one hand, the free arm hanging down. While the substitution of an overseer for a worker or vice versa is credible in terms of the composition of a shabti set (see below), conversion of the cast seems strange, for moulds presumably existed for both types.

Comparison of three figures from a single set, one mummiform and two overseers, both of the latter being *identically modified* worker-shabtis, is illuminating. One of the overseers (fig. 1) is in the Macclesfield Museum (no. 1810.77),² and the other in the Petrie Museum, University College London (UC 40022), where it is accompanied by its mummiform counterpart (UC 40021).³ All three are in red pottery with details in black, and heights of 12.6, 13.2 and 12.8 cm respectively. Their owner was Ankhefenmut, god's father of Amun and Mut, whose coffin was preserved in the Second Cache at Deir el-Bahari (Cairo CG 6073).⁴ While the mummiform figure is conventional, with hoes held in both crossed

¹⁰ F. N. Hepper, *Pharaoh's Flowers* (London, 1990), 60.

¹¹ W. V. Davies, 'Ancient Egyptian Timber Imports: An Analysis of Wooden Coffins in the British Museum', in W. V. Davies and L. Schofield (eds), *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant: Interconnections in the Second Millennium BC* (London, 1995), 150; R. Gale, P. Gasson, N. Hepper and G. Killen, 'Wood', in P. T. Nicholson and I. Shaw (eds), *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology* (Cambridge, 2000), 334–52.

¹ J.-F. Aubert, 'Nouvelles observations sur les chaouabtis de Deir el-Bahari et autres de la 21^e dynastie', *CdE* 56 (1981), 15–30; see also L. Aubert, *Les statuettes funéraires de la Deuxième Cachette à Deir el-Bahari* (Paris, 1998), nos. 2, 28 and 30.

² R. David, *The Macclesfield Collection of Egyptian Antiquities* (Warminster, 1980), 45 (2), pl. D (2). Dr David's cooperation is gratefully acknowledged.

³ W. M. F. Petrie, *Shabtis* (BSAE 57; London, 1935, reprinted Warminster, 1974), nos. 434 (mummiform), 435 (overseer), pls. 11, 16, 40. For the mummiform figure, see also H. D. Schneider, *Shabtis* (Leiden, 1977), II, 142–3 (4.5.1.1), fig. 117; III, pl. 54; L. Aubert, *Statuettes funéraires*, no. 6, pl. 3.

⁴ G. Daressy, 'Les cercueils des prêtres d'Ammon (Deuxième trouvaille de Deir el-Bahari)', *ASAE* 8 (1907), 3–38, no. 140. A. Niwiński, *21st Dynasty Coffins from Thebes* (Mainz, 1988), no. 140.



FIG. 1. After R. David, *The Macclesfield Collection of Egyptian Antiquities*, pl. D (2).

hands, the overseers combine these features with the typically disengaged arm held close to the right side, and very obviously added later. An attempt seems also to have been made on the right shoulder to change into a whip the hoe once held by the left hand. In keeping with their new role, the overseers were provided with a projecting kilt, bearing a column of inscription similar in content to that on the mummiform figure.⁵ The former's text is, however, quite exceptionally in raised relief, and also in mirror image, features which together suggest an impression taken from the incised copy on the worker, using a wedge of clay, afterwards stuck on the figure to make the kilt. Since most shabtis of the period have painted inscriptions, the curious procedure just inferred cannot be taken as typical. Inconsistently, the lappet wig and adjacent feet position of the mummiform original have been retained, the overseer being usually shown striding.

The main problems with the type concern style and motive. Disparity between the punctilious alterations and their apparently negligent execution is striking. However, many shabtis of the period, including even royal examples, were notably perfunctory in workmanship, perhaps reflecting the current change in their status from personal representations to mass-produced servant models, bearing their owner's name simply as a property mark. More puzzling is the presence of the third arm. If these statuettes were really bungled conversions, their 'errors' were oddly persistent, and are exactly duplicated in our two samples. Indeed, one wonders whether such figures were actually intended as hybrid forms, incongruous elements representing various attributes being common in Egyptian iconography. But if this were the case, why begin on one basis, change to another, involving alteration of the cast, and then repeat the laborious process in subsequent models? It may be that the composite figures were meant to incorporate as dual-purpose reserves a surplus of named casts of either category (overseer/worker), which for ideological reasons could not be discarded or destroyed. By this means the numerical proportions of the shabti set⁶ (365 workers, one for each day of the year, led by 36 overseers) would have been preserved against injury and wastage. The practice does not seem to have been widespread, and was perhaps a local conceit, leavened with a touch of drollery.

H. M. STEWART

⁵ The first word *shd* is omitted on both overseer figures, presumably through lack of space.

⁶ Schneider, *Shabtis* I, 319–23.