



Shabti of Iset-em-khebit

Date

c. 1070-656 B.C.E.

Medium

Red clay with black, yellow, red pigment

Description

In the Egyptian afterlife, everyone was expected to work in the Field of Reeds (or A'aru) for Osiris, the god of death. Shabtis first began appearing in tombs of the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2040 – 1782 B.C.E.), likely evolving from the wooden models of servants and workers that were included in Old and Middle Kingdom burials. At first, they were only mummiform and most were placed in their own coffins. Most remained uninscribed, but some included the name of their owners or fractions of the shabti spell from Chapter 6 of the Book of the Dead. By the New Kingdom, shabtis had come to personify the deceased and perform labor on their behalf in the A'aru. They were made of predominantly clay and faience, and painted with agricultural implements such as sickles, hoes, baskets, and brick molds for working in the A'aru. Most tombs contain at least a few shabtis. Over time, it became more common to include 365 worker shabtis (one for each day of the year) and 36 overseers (one for every 10 worker shabtis) in wealthier tombs, totaling 401. This Third Intermediate Period shabti (ca. 1070 – 656 B.C.E.) was excavated from Abydos sometime between 1899 – 1902, and donated to the College by William C. Winslow in 1902. It has been attributed to Iset-em-khebit, though shabtis in other museum collections that have also been attributed to Iset-em-khebit possess different iconographic features. Iset-em-khebit was the daughter of the 25th Dynasty Kushite pharaoh Shabaka (r. 705 – 690 B.C.E.). It is perfectly likely that Iset-em-khebit would have been buried with many shabtis, if not a complete set of 401, and that shabtis of varying

iconographies would have been gifted to her by various makers. (Written by Kayley Boddy '22) Catalogue card from 1960s: "Clay ushabti of Tent-hor, Singer of Amen. Egyptian, XXIst-XXVth Dyn. Gift of: W.C. Winslow '62. Prov: ?Egypt. Reddish clay; red, yellow, black paint. Front modelled; back pared. Black wig. Red on face, satchel, neck. Yellow panel on legs outlined in red, containing inscription painted in black. Hands not differentiated."

Dimensions

Overall: 5 1/4 × 5/8 in. (13.3 × 1.6 cm)