

SHABTIS  
الأوشابتي (الشوابتي)

*Henk Milde*

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Short Citation:  
Milde, 2012, Shabtis. *UEE*.

Full Citation:  
Milde, Henk, 2012, Shabtis. In Willeke Wendrich (ed.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles.  
<http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/viewItem.do?ark=21198/zz002bwv0z>

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Uschebtis  
Chaouabtis

*A shabti is a funerary figure that is usually mummiform in shape and originally represented the deceased in his dignified status. Some New Kingdom shabtis, however, are clad in the dress of daily life. Background of the shabti-concept was the need for food that had to be produced in the realm of the dead as well as on earth. There was an ambiguity in function: a shabti represented the deceased and a shabti substituted the deceased. On the one hand it was a means for the deceased to benefit from the food production, on the other hand it created a possibility to escape from the burdensome labor required for the food production. Whenever the deceased was summoned to cultivate the fields in the hereafter, a shabti was supposed to present itself on his/her behalf saying, "I shall do it, here I am." The substitution was secured by an incantation that—after the Middle Kingdom—used to be written on the shabtis themselves. The spell is also known from the Coffin Texts and the Book of the Dead. Towards the end of the New Kingdom, the number of shabtis per burial grew considerably. A total of c. 400 was not uncommon in the Late Period. By then shabtis had become mere slaves.*

الأوشابتي هو تمثال جنازي في الغالب يكون على هيئة المومياء ، وهو في الأصل يمثل المتوفي بمكانة ووضع المجل ، بعض الأوشابتي من عصر الدولة الحديثة ظهرت مرتديه ملابس الحياة اليومية. نشأت فكرة هذه التماثيل الصغيرة من إحتياج المتوفي للطعام الذي يستوجب إنتاجه في عالم الموتى كما هو الحال في عالم الأحياء. هناك إلتباس وغموض حول الغرض من تلك التماثيل: فيمثل الشابتي المتوفي وفي نفس الوقت يقوم بمقام المتوفي. حيث اعتبر كوسيلة للمتوفي للاستفادة من إنتاج الغذاء، ومن جانب آخر فقد كان وسيلة للتهرب من العمل الشاق الذي يتطلبه إنتاج الغذاء، فكلما تم استدعاء المتوفي للعمل في حقول العالم الآخر، كان على أحد الشوابتي التقدم والإنابة عنه قائلاً « سوف أفعل، أنا هنا». وبعد إنتهاء الدولة الوسطى، بدأت كتابة تعويذة تضمن أداء هذه الوظيفة على تماثيل الأوشابتي نفسها. عرفت تلك التعويذة أيضا في نصوص التوابيت وكتاب الموتى. وبنهاية الدولة الحديثة زاد عدد الشوابتي ، ان وصول المجموع أربعمئة تمثال جنازي في كل دفنة كان أمرا معتادا في العصر المتأخر. وحينئذ كان الأوشابتي ليس إلا عبدا للمتوفي.



shabti is a funerary figure. If confined to statuettes belonging to the tomb equipment (Schlög 1985: 896), Osirian statuettes buried elsewhere are not to be classified as shabtis (Hayes 1959:

230). But it is difficult to deny, as a rule, votive figurines from various other sacred places the status of sha(wa)btis, several of them being designated as such (see, for example, fig. 1 right). Pumpenmeier (1998) called attention to extrasepulchral shabti-



Figure 1. Left: Shabti of Hesyef-shemsu-nesu in dress of daily life, carrying hoes and holding *djed* and *tit* amulets. Wood. Height 19.4 cm. Provenance unknown. Dynasty 19 (early). Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities CI 3. Typology 3.1.5.5. Right: Shabti of Wepwautmes in dress of daily life, holding *ba*-bird. Stela on the back inscribed with shabti spell. Wood (ebony). Height 25 cm. From Saqqara (?). Dynasty 19 (early). Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities AH 117. Typology 3.1.5.3.

depositories. The oldest occurrence of the word so far dates from an 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty tomb, where *ššbty* is a designation for a member of the household bringing fowl (Budge 1911: pl. 51). On coffins of the Middle Kingdom, the spelling *ššbtyw* is found, seemingly a plural (de Buck *CT VI*: 1a and 2a), but constructed as a singular (Schneider 1977, Vol. 1: 136 - 137). The etymology of the word has been much discussed. There might be a connection with words for food, like *ššbw*, *ššbt*, *šbw*, *šbt* (Erman and Grapow *WB IV*: 410, 2.4, 437, 6.10 - 11). An interpretation based upon *ššbt*, “corvée” (Speleers 1923: 88 - 93), turned out to be untenable (Erman and Grapow *Belegstellen WB IV*: 410, 4). Schneider (1977, Vol. 1: 136 - 137) argues for a derivation from *šbd*, a

Semitic loanword meaning “stick,” “staff” (Erman and Grapow *WB IV*: 442, 13).

In the 17<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, the variant spelling *shawabti* turned up (*ššwšbty* or *šwbty*, in case of group-writing). This designation has been connected with the word *shawab*, “persea tree” (Hayes 1953: 326). A shawabti, therefore, would be a “statuette made of persea wood.” However, shabtis of persea wood are virtually absent, as Petrie (1935: 5) already observed. What is more, the rubric of *CT* Spell 472 stipulates: “to be recited over a statue of the master as he was on earth, made of tamarisk (*jsr*) or zizyphus wood (*nbs*) and placed <in> the chapel of the glorified spirit” (de Buck *CT VI*: 2i - k). Here, too, shawabti may be derived from *šbd* (Schneider 1977, Vol. 1: 138).

During the late New Kingdom, the word *shebti* (*šbty*) is found, apparently a derivation of the verb *šbj*, “to replace” (Erman and Grapow *WB IV*: 436, 12: “eine Person ersetzen = an deren Stelle treten”). A shebti, therefore, is a “substitute” for the deceased.

Whereas shabti remained in use, the word shawabti gave way to another spelling. From the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty onwards, we usually read *ushebti*. The new expression is obviously a folk-etymology: an ushebti (*wšbty*) was understood as an “answerer” (*wšb*). In the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, the word occasionally occurred with an extension: *ter-ushebti*. The prefix “*tr-*” (allegedly from *trr*, Erman and Grapow *WB V*: 382 - 383; Schneider 1977, Vol. I: 328) qualifies the ushebti as being “diligent.”

### Meaning

Shabtis originated from the tomb imagery of the Old Kingdom (Morenz 1975). Their meaning is ambiguous. A shabti represented the deceased, functioning as a vehicle for the *ka*-soul in order to receive offerings. And a shabti substituted the deceased, functioning as a servant involved in food production. Dedication of shabtis by relatives or servants was not unusual in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, these statuettes could also be granted “as a favor by the king.” Since the



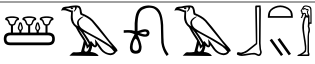

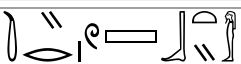
1.		<i>šzbtj</i>	BM 614b: jamb from the tomb of Tjetji Budge 1911: pl. 51, no. 102
2.		<i>šzbtjw</i>	de Buck <i>CT VI</i> : 2a (B1P)
3.		<i>šzwbty</i> <i>šwbty</i>	BD Spell 6 in P. Nu Lapp 1997: pl. 62
4.		<i>wšbty.w</i>	Bill of sale for a set of ushabtis Edwards 1971: pl. XXXII
5.		<i>tr-wšbty</i>	Rare, not on statuettes Oracular Decree on behalf of Neskhons Černý 1942: 107 - 109

Table 1. The word shabti and some variant readings in hieroglyphs.

end of the New Kingdom, the ambiguity was solved in that the individual shabti disappeared in gangs of slaves, supervised by overseer (*reš*) shabtis.

Background of the shabti-concept was the need for food that had to be produced in the realm of the dead as well as on earth. Just as the pharaoh imposed conscripted agricultural labor, so did the gods in the hereafter. High officials tried to escape these obligations by a king's decree (*wḏ nsw*). In a similar way, dignified deceased persons resorted to an exonerative text, an incantation that was not only recited but, since the Middle Kingdom, written down as well. The purpose of these texts was to avert the burden of menial labor in the hereafter from the deceased to a personal substitute, eventually to masses of slaves. Activities, however, like plowing, sowing, and reaping were commonly accepted in the iconographical repertoire (Spell 110 of the *Book of the Dead* in tombs or on papyri). But the issue here was not menial labor that the deceased was obliged to do. Here it was about an aspect of the blissful life in the Field of Offerings to which the deceased willingly committed himself. Therefore, no shabtis appear in this context (Gesellensetter 2002:

129 note 333 and 148); for the same reason these substitutes were not wanted for eating, drinking, and having sex.

The ancient idea of a *ka*-statue representing the owner survived in the dedication of so-called “stick”-shabtis by relatives on the occasion of funerary celebrations in or near tomb-chapels (Whelan 2007: 45 - 47; Willems 2009: 518) and in the votive use of shabtis put in sacred places (Stewart 1995: 10 - 12). In this way the deceased remained present to relatives and stayed in the vicinity of important divine rulers like Osiris (Abydos), Sokar (Saqqara, Giza), and Apis (Serapeum) in whose offering rituals he could partake.

### Development

Precursors of the shabtis date from the First Intermediate Period: tiny figures of wax or clay showing the human body as on earth, with legs together and arms by their side. Wrapped in linen, they were placed in little rectangular coffins (Hayes 1953: 326 - 327). The first mummiform statuettes appeared in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasties (Bourriau 1988). Name and titles occurred occasionally, a (simple) shabti text just in a few cases. Although the rubric of the shabti spell refers



Figure 2. Uninscribed mummiform shabti. Green schist. Height 12.5 cm. Allegedly from Gebelein. Dynasty 12/13. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities F 1971/7.1. Typology 1.2.4.1.

to a statue of the master “as he was on earth,” we see the deceased in a *sab*-status (fig. 2), a dignity acquired after mummification. Originally these figurines seemed to represent the deceased person, although the idea of substitution by a servant existed already.

After the Middle Kingdom, the shabti phenomenon faded into the background, but it recurred in the 17<sup>th</sup> Dynasty at Thebes. Most of these shabtis are crudely cut wooden statuettes, so-called “stick”-shabtis (Whelan 2007), placed in little coffins and often inscribed with a short text (fig. 3 left). They have usually been found outside the tomb-chamber.

From the New Kingdom onwards, shabtis generally show an inarticulate body, from which only the head (with wig) protrudes. Often the hands are visible, especially when they hold tools or other attributes. In general, the size varies between a few centimeters and c. 50 cm. One of the largest known statuettes is the shabti of Khebeny (fig. 4), measuring 58.5 cm. Shabtis of Amenhotep III in the Louvre Museum even surpass this giant, one



Figure 3. Left: “Stick”-shabti of Teti-sa-Intef with *betep di nesut* formula. Wood. Height 16 cm. From Dra Abu el-Naga. Dynasty 17. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities F 1971/2.4. Typology 2.1.1.4. Right: Uninscribed “peg”-shabti. Alabaster. Height 15 cm. Provenance unknown. Dynasty 20. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities F 1961/12.1. Typology 3.2.4.10.

of them measuring 67 cm (Ziegler and Bovot 2006: 102). Royal shabtis are generally marked by regalia like crowns and *nemes*-headdresses. An iconographical novelty that came into being in the New Kingdom gave shabtis their characteristic appearance: the statuettes were carved or painted with agricultural tools like hoes, picks, and bags, but also yokes with waterpots and brick molds (fig. 5 right). Such implements were occasionally added separately as models (fig. 6 inset). Shabtis also grasp attributes like *ankh*-signs, *djed*- and *tit*-amulets (fig. 1 left), *hes*-vases (Moje 2008), scepters, and pieces of cloth. Occasionally they even embrace a *ba*-bird (fig. 1 right), an image recalling the vignette of Spell 89 of the *Book of the Dead* (Loeben 1987). Special figures have been found, such as animal-headed shabtis (especially from Apis burials at Saqqara), pairs of shabtis, shabtis reclining on biers, and kneeling shabtis grinding corn.

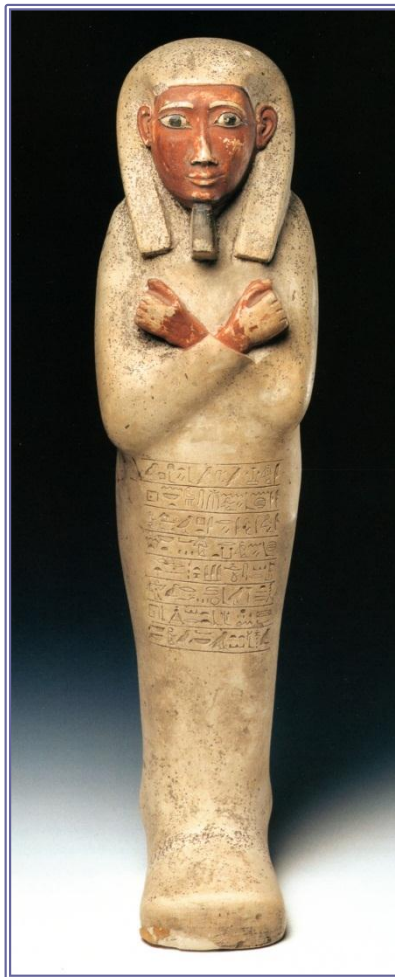


Figure 4. Shabti of the mayor (*ḥsty-ꜥ*) Khebeny. Painted limestone. Height 58.5 cm. From Abydos (?). Dynasty 17 (late) or 18 (early). Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities AST 43. Typology 2.2.1.3.

After Amarna, a new type appeared, showing the deceased not as a mummy but in the then fashionable clothing (fig. 1). Towards the end of the New Kingdom, the number of shabtis per burial grew considerably, whereas their size decreased proportionally. The so-called “peg”-shabtis (*à contours perdus*) also date from this period (fig. 3 right). The increase in number caused mass production in molds. On the conceptual side, the development was even more drastic, which is reflected in terminology. A *ushebtī* is no longer a familiar servant, but an indifferent slave (*ḥm*) who has “to answer” (*wšb*) to summons. A slight metathesis in spelling (*šwbtj* > *wšbtj*) reflects a



Figure 5. Left: Shabti of the overseer Gautseshnu in dress of daily life holding whips. Faience, Deir el-Bahri blue glaze. From Deir el-Bahri (Cache II). Height 11.2 cm. Dynasty 21. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities F 93/10.81. Typology 4.3.5.5. Right: Shabti of Hori, viceroy of Nubia, carrying hoes (front), brick molds, a yoke with waterpots, and a basket (back). Faience. Height 11 cm. From Tell Basta. Dynasty 20. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities F 1970/1.1. Typology 3.3.0.5.

considerable change in status. When personal ties fade, responsibility wanes. This may have led to the creation of overseer (*reḥ*) shabtis from Dynasties 20 - 25, clad in daily dress and carrying whips to stress their authority (fig. 5 left). The rare expression *tr-wšbtj* from the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty may confirm this development. For shabtis, being diligent was no longer a matter of course. In an oracular decree, Amun declares that he will see to it that the *ter-ushebtis* perform their duties for Neskhons. Because it is for her exemption that they were bought (Černý 1942, Part 1: 105 - 118). A receipt from the 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty mentions the delivery of no less than 401 ushebtis, “male and female slaves” (*ḥmw, ḥmwt*), 365 workers (one for each day), and 36 overseers (Edwards 1971). It has been suggested that the payment not only compensated the manufacturer but also covered the “wages” of the ushebtis (Taylor 2001: 116; Warburton 1984 - 1985: 345 - 355, 2007: 175 - 179). This view has persistently been contested by Poole (2005: 165 - 170, 2010: 83 - 87). Male and female ushebtī-slaves also figure in Spell 166 of the

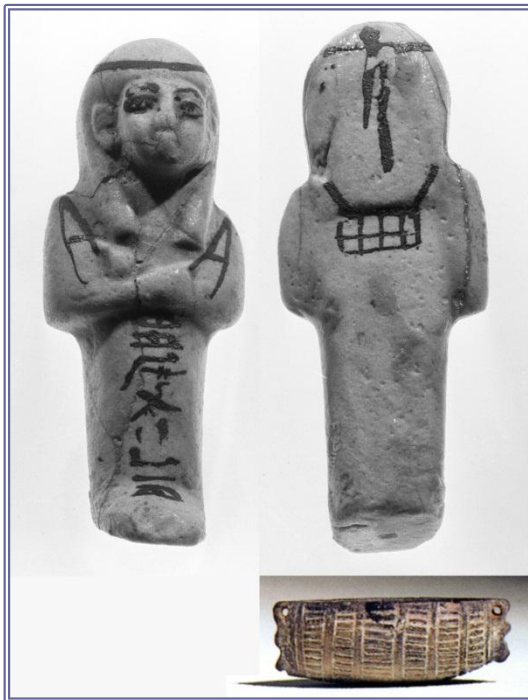


Figure 6. Shabti of Nesypaheran with a *sesbed*-band around the wig, carrying hoes and a basket. Faience. Height 10.6 cm. From Deir el-Bahri (Cache II). Dynasty 21. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities, Inv. no. F 93/10.56. Typology 4.3.1.48. Inset: Model of a shabti basket. Faience. Height 2.1 cm, length 6 cm, and width 2.9 cm. New Kingdom. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities L.XIII.22.

*Chapitres Supplémentaires* (Pleyte 1881, Vol. 2: 58 - 59, Vol. 3: pls. 121 - 123). Since they were bought, they should perform their duties at the right time instead of the deceased whenever he is remembered (Černý 1942, Part 2: 118 - 133). Shabtis of this (Third Intermediate) period generally wear a *sesbed*-band around their head (fig. 6).

The general decline in craftsmanship was countered by the rulers of the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Kushite statuettes are rather thickset figures (fig. 7). Large stone shabtis even recurred.

In the Saite renaissance, a new standard was developed displaying a characteristic feature of ancient statuary: the dorsal pillar (fig. 8), which could be inscribed with the so-called “Saitic formula” (see below). Overseer shabtis cannot be distinguished any longer. Text-



Figure 7. Shabti of the king's scribe Horkhebi. Faience. Height 16.8 cm. From Thebes (?). Dynasty 25/26. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities AF 55. Typology 5.3.1.189.

versions, too, recalled the past. They resumed the structure of the Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts (Schneider 1977, Vol. 1: 78, 154 - 155). The shabti stands on a pedestal (sometimes *maat*-shaped). The hands grasp two hoes or a hoe and a pick, as well as the rope of a basket hung over the left shoulder (fig. 8). The face displays a “Greek” smile and is adorned with the long Osirian beard, even in the case of women. Individual shabtis can be male or female (mainly marked by the wig, sometimes also by dress or breasts), according to the persons in question. Sexual differentiation among the depersonalized shabtis of the Late



Figure 8. Left: Shabti of Imhotep, standing on a pedestal supported by a dorsal pillar, grasping hoe and pick and carrying a basket over his left shoulder. Faience. Height 20.5 cm. From Saqqara (?). Dynasty 30. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities AF 38a. Typology 5.3.1.9. Right: Shabti of Nesbanebdjed with text in T-shape. Faience. Height 16.5 cm. From Tell el-Ruba (Mendes). Dynasty 30. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities F 1970/1.4. Typology 5.3.1.164.

Period reflects the general composition of personnel. From the Persian Period onwards, texts also appeared in a T-shaped arrangement (fig. 8 right: horizontal line over a vertical column).

#### Formulae

Schneider (1977, Vol. I: 81 - 82) distinguishes between seven versions of the spell, each with several variants. The oldest version, CT Spell 472, has been found on two coffins from Deir el-Bersha. The text is a compilation of two variants, concluded by a single rubric (cited above) and introduced (at least in B2L) by a single title, “Spell for causing a shabti to do work for his master in the realm of the dead” (de Buck *CT VI*: 1a). The first variant fell into disuse, the second underwent several adaptations, but had a comeback in the Late Period due to renaissancistic tendencies. In the *Book of the Dead*, the spell occurs occasionally, either separately (Spell 6 of the *Book of the Dead*) or as part of the captions

concerning the burial chamber (Spell 151 Ai of the *Book of the Dead*). In the papyrus of Nu, we read:

Spell for causing a shawabti to do work in the realm of the dead. To be recited by N: “O these shawabtis, if one counts off the Osiris N to do any work that should be done there in the realm of the dead, and he, indeed, is to obey there in order to act like a man at his duties, then one is counting off in respect of you, at any time on which one should serve, be it tilling the fields, irrigating the riparian lands, transporting by boat the sand of the West (and) of the East, ‘I shall do it, here I am,’ you shall say.” (Spell 6 of the *Book of the Dead*; Lapp 1997: pl. 62).

The idiomatic use of *hwj sdb*, “to obey” (instead of the usual translation “to implant an obstacle”), has been suggested by Heerma van Voss in a Dutch translation of the text on a shabti in a museum in Leeuwarden (Heerma van Voss 1987: 4; further references in Van der Molen 2000: 592). The interpretation of “sand” is quite mysterious (Heerma van Voss 1963). It might be sand from the desert blown over the arable fields that should be removed (Petrie 1935: 10), or material for building dykes around the fields (Schneider 1977, Vol. 1: 59), or some type of fertilizer (Hornung 1979: 48) comparable to the *sebakb* (Barguet 1967: 42) used by present-day *fellahin*.

The wording of the spell illustrates that the owner is not playing the part of a landlord demanding statute labor, but that he himself is subject to conscription, for which he is seeking substitution (Bonnet 1952: 849 - 850).

From the 17<sup>th</sup> Dynasty onwards, the spell appeared more regularly on shabtis themselves (e.g., fig. 4). Only a few simple versions are found earlier. During the Middle Kingdom, the inscriptions, if any, were limited to the name (and titles) of the deceased, sometimes introduced by a *hetep di nesut* formula. This offering formula gave way to the introduction *shd* (Osiris) N, “illuminating (the Osiris) N” or “the illuminated (Osiris) N,” found on most statuettes (Schneider

1977, Vol. 1: 128).

A variant text has been found on statuettes from Abydos: the “Amenhotep III formula.” Characteristic is the address to the gods at the side of Osiris. They should pronounce the owner’s name in order to secure his share of the evening meals and the offerings at the *Wag*-festival.

Principal object of the so-called “Khamuas formula” is the wish to see the sun disk and adore the sun in life. This recalls older formulae under Akhenaten (Martin 1986). Most private shabtis of this period, however, provide the conventional wording.

In the “town-god formula” the divinity in question is implored to stand behind the deceased. This is represented iconographically by a dorsal pillar, the *benben* or sun pillar being a manifestation of the town-god. The formula already occurred in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, but is often found on the dorsal pillar of Saitic shabtis. That is why the “town-god formula” is also known as “Saitic formula.”

On the whole, most shabtis display a very short text, often no more than *shd* plus name.

#### Material and Manufacture

From the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty to the end of the New Kingdom, statuettes were made of wood, but not exclusively. With the exception of the Second Intermediate Period, there were also stone and faience shabtis. Stone shabtis recurred under the Kushite rulers, whereas the ever popular faience remained in use into the Ptolemaic Period. Other materials were pottery, clay, glass, and bronze.

Stone and wooden shabtis were individually cut and carved. Faience figurines were made in molds, after which further details were applied. The finishing touch determined most of the quality. Typical for faience statuettes is their glaze. The shabtis found by thousands in the Deir el-Bahri Caches (Aubert 1998; Janes 2002: xxii - xxv) are renowned for their deep blue glaze. The majority of the Late Period shabtis is green (fig. 8).

The value of shabtis was dependent on

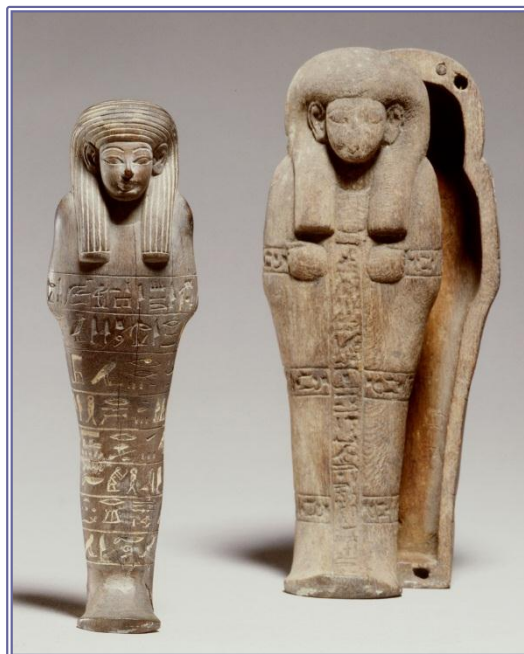


Figure 9. Shabti of Amenemope/Ipuy next to anthropoid model coffin with inscribed mummy bandages (Nut spell). Wood. Height 18 cm (shabti) and 21 cm (coffin). From Thebes (?). Dynasty 18/19. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities L.IX.10. Typology 3.1.1.5.

material and quality. According to ostrakon IFAO 764, the price for 40 shabtis was one *deben* (Janssen 1975: 243). The low price might be an argument for the obtainability of shabtis even for the poor (Poole 1999: 109; contra Schneider 1977, Vol. 1: 9: “Shabtis for the poor never existed”). However, the entire ostrakon deals with decoration prices only (Cooney 2007: 32). The “bill of sale for a set of ushabtis” (Edwards 1971) does not mention a price, unfortunately.

#### Storage

Mass production also influenced the storage of shabtis. In the Middle and New Kingdom, individual shabtis were placed, like mummies, in miniature coffins (fig. 9) or, like divine images, in little shrines with vaulted lids. Originally the coffins were rectangular, later *rishi*-shaped and anthropoid. In the Ramesside Period, shabtis were also stored in pottery jars locked with jackal-headed lids (to be distinguished from Duamutef canopic jars).



Figure 10. Shabti-box of the lady Mutemmerites who is facing her own shabti carrying hoes and a basket. Shabti spell in between. Wood. Height 34.5 cm, length 56 cm, and width 32 cm. Dynasty 22. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities AH 186.

With the increase in number of shabtis per burial, they were stored in multiple shrines and eventually stacked in painted boxes (fig. 10; Aston 1994). Shabtis have also been found freestanding near the mummy, in holes, or arrayed elsewhere in or in the vicinity of the tomb. They have also been dug out from depositories at other sacrosanct places (Pumpenmeier 1998). From ostrakon Turin 57387 may be inferred that shabti box and shabtis were bought together (Cooney 2007: 32).

### *Typology*

In his study on the Leiden shabtis, Schneider (1977, Vol. II: Chapter IV, pp. 22 - 24: Arrangement of the Catalogue) established a general typology starting with an indication of period, material, and iconography (see table 2), followed by a sequence number of the Leiden Collection.

Further information is classified in section and type codes, such as class (Cl), wigs (W), hand positions (H), implements (I), bags and baskets (B), attributes (A), text position (Tp), and version of the shabti spell (V). Finally, specific data about the object are given.

In view of digitalization, a new typology is being developed (see *Bibliographic Notes*).

Period	Material	Iconography
1 Middle Kingdom	1 wood	0 royal persons
2 Second Intermediate Period	2 stone	1 private persons, mummiform, name mentioned
3 New Kingdom	3 faience	2 private persons, mummiform, name illegible
4 Third Intermediate Period	4 glass	3 private persons, mummiform, anonymous
5 Late - Ptolemaic Period	5 pottery	4 private persons, mummiform, uninscribed
	6 mud	5 private persons, dress of daily life, name mentioned
	7 bronze	6 private persons, dress of daily life, name illegible
	8 others	7 private persons, dress of daily life, anonymous

Table 2. Main lines of a general typology of shabtis as developed by Schneider (1977).

### *Bibliographic Notes*

So many shabtis, so many shabti publications! In 1952 Hans Bonnet gave an outstanding summary of the previous and current theories. An update appeared in the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (Schlögl 1985). In the meantime, Jacques and Liliane Aubert had published an extensive book on shabtis (Aubert and Aubert 1974). Fundamental, though, is the study by Hans Schneider (1977). Apart from substantial historical and religio-historical research, he developed a typology (Schneider 1977, Vol. 1: chapter IV) in order to make elaborate and repetitive descriptions of the abundant material superfluous. He submitted the collection of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden to this procedure (Schneider 1977, Vol. 2: *passim*) and made it manageable by means of key pages with outlines of the various types (Schneider 1977, Vol. 3; adopted in Janes 2002: 227 - 249). The building of databases and the use of the Internet required an adaptive approach. An international working-group developed a new typology (“grille de saisie”) and established a shabti-database: *Base Internationale des Shabouabtis (BIS)*. From 1987 to 2007, Jean-Luc Chappaz, member of the working-group, published a very useful Annual Index of shabti figures in the Geneva *Bulletin de la Société d’Égyptologie*. The digital continuation of this work (*la base sebedj*) as well as the shabti database just mentioned can be found at the website of the *Société d’Égyptologie, Genève*. In the series *Corpus Antiquitatum Aegyptiacarum*, several shabti collections were made accessible, e.g., the shabti collections in the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam (Van Haarlem 1990), the Etnografisk Museum in Oslo (Naguib 1985), the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Reiser-Haslauer 1990, 1992), and museums in the Rhine-Main region (Schlick-Nolte and von Droste zu Hülshoff 1984). Schlögl (2000) published the collections in Kraków. The collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris has been described by Aubert and

Aubert (2005). Apart from the collection of the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire in Geneva, Chappaz (1984) also brought specimens from private collections to light. So did Janes (2002), Schlögl and Brodbeck (1990), as well as Schlögl and Meves-Schlögl (1993). Shabtis have been studied from different angles: stick shabtis (Whelan 2007; Willems 2009), royal shabtis (Bovot 2003, Clayton 1972), shabtis from the world of Amenhotep III (Kozloff and Bryan 1992, Chapter X: 305 - 330), shabtis from the Amarna Period (Martin 1986), shabtis from Deir el-Medina (Valbelle 1972), and shabtis from the Caches of Deir el-Bahri (Aubert 1998). Excellent overviews appeared in the Shire Egyptology series (Stewart 1995) and in a chapter devoted to "Funerary Figurines" in *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* by John Taylor (2001).

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## External Links

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La base shedj. (Internet resource: <http://www.segweb.ch/>. Accession date: August 2011.)

## Image Credits

I am greatly indebted to Dr. Maarten J. Raven, curator of the Egyptian Department of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden (Netherlands), who kindly permitted me to illustrate the article with artifacts from the Leiden Museum. The reader should realize that some objects have been composed in one figure disregarding real sizes. Measures can be found in the list below.

- Figure 1. Left: Shabti of Hesyef-shemsu-nesu in dress of daily life, carrying hoes and holding *djed* and *tit* amulets. Wood. Height 19.4 cm. Provenance unknown. Dynasty 19 (early). Inv. no. CI 3. Typology 3.1.5.5. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.  
Right: Shabti of Wepwautmes in dress of daily life, holding *ba*-bird. Stela on the back inscribed with shabti spell. Wood (ebony). Height 25 cm. From Saqqara (?). Dynasty 19 (early). Inv. no. AH 117. Typology 3.1.5.3. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.
- Figure 2. Uninscribed mummiform shabti. Green schist. Height 12.5 cm. Allegedly from Gebelcin. Dynasty 12/13. Inv. no. F 1971/7.1. Typology 1.2.4.1. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.
- Figure 3. Left: "Stick"-shabti of Teti-sa-Intef with *betep di nesut* formula. Wood. Height 16 cm. From Dra Abu el-Naga. Dynasty 17. Inv. no. F 1971/2.4. Typology 2.1.1.4. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Right: Uninscribed “peg”-shabti. Alabaster. Height 15 cm. Provenance unknown. Dynasty 20. Inv. no. F 1961/12.1. Typology 3.2.4.10. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Figure 4. Shabti of the mayor (*h3ty*-*ṛ*) Khebeny. Painted limestone. Height 58.5 cm. From Abydos (?). Dynasty 17 (late) or 18 (early). Inv. no. AST 43. Typology 2.2.1.3. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Figure 5. Left: Shabti of the overseer Gautseshnu in dress of daily life holding whips. Faience, Deir el-Bahri blue glaze. From Deir el-Bahri (Cache II). Height 11.2 cm. Dynasty 21. Inv. no. F 93/10.81. Typology 4.3.5.5. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Right: Shabti of Hori, viceroy of Nubia, carrying hoes (front), brick molds, a yoke with waterpots, and a basket (back). Faience. Height 11 cm. From Tell Basta. Dynasty 20. Inv. no. F 1970/1.1. Typology 3.3.0.5. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Figure 6. Shabti of Nesypaheran with a *seshed*-band around the wig, carrying hoes and a basket. Faience. Height 10.6 cm. From Deir el-Bahri (Cache II). Dynasty 21. Inv. no. F 93/10.56. Typology 4.3.1.48. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Inset: Model of a shabti basket. Faience. Height 2.1 cm, length 6 cm, and width 2.9 cm. New Kingdom. Inv. no. L.XIII.22. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Figure 7. Shabti of the king’s scribe Horkhebi. Faience. Height 16.8 cm. From Thebes (?). Dynasty 25/26. Inv. no. AF 55. Typology 5.3.1.189. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Figure 8. Left: Shabti of Imhotep, standing on a pedestal supported by a dorsal pillar, grasping hoe and pick and carrying a basket over his left shoulder. Faience. Height 20.5 cm. From Saqqara (?). Dynasty 30. Inv. no. AF 38a. Typology 5.3.1.9. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Right: Shabti of Nesbanebdjed with text in T-shape. Faience. Height 16.5 cm. From Tell el-Ruba (Mendes). Dynasty 30. Inv. no. F 1970/1.4. Typology 5.3.1.164. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Figure 9. Shabti of Amenemope/Ipuy next to anthropoid model coffin with inscribed mummy bandages (Nut spell). Wood. Height 18 cm (shabti) and 21 cm (coffin). From Thebes (?). Dynasty 18/19. Inv. no. L.IX.10. Typology 3.1.1.5. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Figure 10. Shabti-box of the lady Mutemmeres who is facing her own shabti carrying hoes and a basket. Shabti spell in between. Wood. Height 34.5 cm, length 56 cm, and width 32 cm. Dynasty 22. Inv. no. AH 186. © Photography National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.