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Ushabti for Udjarenes

Late 25th – early 26th Dynasty,

.670-650 B.C.,

Egypt

Serpentine

H: 18.5cm

A mummiform shabti wearing a plain wig with extended lappets tucked behind large ears. The broad face has precisely carved details including cosmetic lines and eyebrows. Folded arms with hands protruding from the wrappings hold the usual agricultural implements of crook and flail, with a seed bag over the left shoulder. Seven lines of hieroglyphic text are inscribed on the body, dedicating the shabti to Mistress of the House, Udjarenes, and quoting Chapter Six of the Book of the Dead. Old inventory number '26' on the base.

Udjarenes (or Wadjrenes) was the daughter of Piankhy-Har and granddaughter of Piye (d. 714 BC), Kushite king and the founder of the 25th, or Nubian, Dynasty of Egypt. A Priestess of Hathor and Singer of Amun, Udjarenes held a highly elite position. Ten other shabtis dedicated to Udjarenes are known, including two in the British Museum (EA68986 and EA24715), two in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, and one in the Berlin Museum (10663).[1]

Udjarenes was the wife of Montuemhat (c. 700-650 BC), Fourth Prophet of Amun and Count of Thebes,

in a politically advantageous match – Udjarenes' uncle, the pharaoh Taharqo, made Montuemhat Governor of Upper Egypt. Following the Assyrian invasion of Egypt and the sack of Thebes in 663 BC, the city was virtually autonomous. In a shrewd political move during the ninth year of his reign, Montuemhat invited Nitocris, the daughter of Psammetichus I, to take the role of God's Wife of Amun (the highest-ranking priestess of Amun). Montuemhat therefore allied himself with both the 25th and the Northern 26th Dynasty. Montuemhat's tomb in El-Assasif (TT34) is one of the largest ever constructed in Egypt for a private person, and had some of the finest reliefs in archaising style of the Late Period. Although Udjarenes was one of three wives of Montuemhat, she was the only one mentioned in his tomb, where she was probably buried.[2]

Several statues of Montuemhat exist in museums today, in which he is portrayed in the style of the pharaohs of the Old Kingdom.

[1] M L Bierbrier, 'Udjarenes rediscovered', *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* (1993, 79), pp. 274-5.

[2] B Porter and R L B Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings, Vol. I: Theban Necropolis, Part 1: Private Tombs* (Oxford, 1973), p. 56.

Literature:

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Antiquities, Christie's, 15th April 2015, London, Lot 51.

Egyptian Antiquities, Charles Ede Ltd, 2016, pp. 24-27.