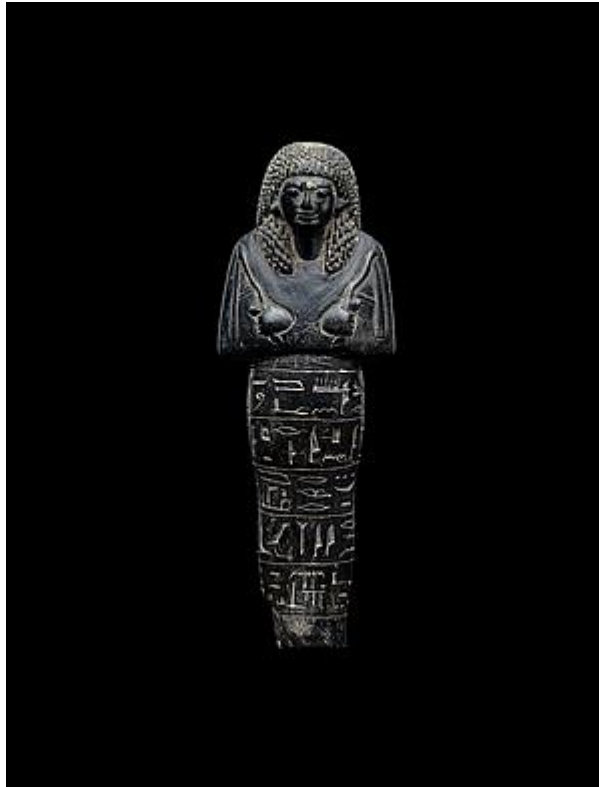


DAVID AARON



Ushabti of Amun-meku

Egypt

Late 18th/Early 19th Dynasty, circa 1320-1250 B.C.,

Steatite

H: 16.5 cm

A black steatite ushabti for Amun-meku, sculpted in typical mummiform pose. The ushabti holds a pair of hoes, one in each hand, with a seed bag over the left shoulder. The ushabti wears a double wig of zigzag and echeloned curls. Five lines of inscription are engraved into the lower body:

- 1 The illuminated one, the Osiris Amun-meku (?) /Mek-amun (?) O
- 2 this shabti, if one counts (you), if one reckons (you) to accomplish
- 3 all duties to be done in the necropolis/netherworld, to cultivate
- 4 the fields, to irrigate the riparian lands, to transport by boat
- 5 the sand/fertile silt from the east to the west, now indeed...

Ushabtis were intended to spare their owners from manual corvée labour in the afterlife, as a stand-in for both the deceased and their servants. In the 18th Dynasty, these statues were referred to as 'shabti',

but by the Late Period the word 'ushabti' came into use. 'Ushabti' may derive from the verb 'wesheb', meaning to answer, in reference to Chapter Six of the Book of the Dead (known as the Ushabti Chapter), which describes how ushabti should answer the call to work in lieu of their owners. This passage is frequently inscribed on the front of ushabti.

Literature:

Antiquities, Sotheby's, London, 6 December 2006, Lot 75.

Patricia Usick, *A Curious and Convivial Traveller: Edward Roger Pratt in Greece and Egypt 1832-34*, British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 6 (Leuven, Paris, and Bristol, CT, 2020), p. 30, fig. 31.