

A FUNERARY STATUETTE FROM THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

(c. 2055-1650 BC)

Se-hetep-ib-Re

S-htp-ib-Re



Middle Kingdom, mid-late 12th Dynasty c. 1800 BC

Provenance unknown



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Se-hetep-ib-Re

Greywacke

Middle Kingdom, mid-late 12th Dynasty c. 1800 BC

Provenance unknown

H. 17.2 cm. W. 6.1 cm. D. 4.0 cm.

ex German private collections in Munich (purchased c. 1950), Hamburg and Paderborn

Unpublished

Exhibited: 'Shabtis: Suspended Truth in Context,' The Manchester Museum, 2017



The earliest funerary figurines dating from the 12th Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom should be referred to funerary statuettes because the term *shabti* was introduced later towards the end of the Dynasty when the earliest form of the so-called *shabti* spell made an appearance, notably on figurines from Lisht and Dahshur.¹ The statuettes were often placed in their own miniature coffins like the earlier wax figures of the First Intermediate Period so they were considered as substitutes for the deceased's mummy in case it was destroyed.

Of mummiform shape, this outstanding shroud-wrapped funerary statuette wears a striated tripartite wig that sits quite high on the head leaving a large expanse of the forehead exposed. The front lappets have a gentle inward curve as opposed to hanging straight down. They are sensitively shaped behind the ears, which protrude and are quite well-defined although lacking any internal details. Crossed arms are suggested beneath the shroud that covers the body of the figure. The face is somewhat square in shape and sensitively carved



each eye are gently shaped. The nose is somewhat bruised but enough remains to show this was quite broad. The cheeks are fleshy and so is the upper lip of the down-turned mouth that gives the face a rather stern appearance as is typically found in the portraiture of Senwosret III in particular (see Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. The face on the funerary statuette of Se-hetep-ib-Re (a) with those of Senwosret III (MMA 26.7.1394 (b) and FWM E.37.1930 (c)) and Amenemhat III (FWM E.2.1946 (d)) for a comparison of facial characteristics.

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with features relating strongly to the royal portraiture of the late 12th Dynasty when outstanding statues of Senwosret III and Amenemhat III were created. Senwosret's face in particular is arguably one of the most individual and instantly recognizable in ancient Egyptian art. These portraits had an influence on works commissioned by private individuals such as the owner of this particular funerary statuette. It was perhaps thought that if an owner was shown in the likeness of the ruling king he would be further guaranteed resurrection in the Afterlife. However, many of the statues portraying Senusret III for example show him looking somewhat old and and very stern although undoubtedly exuding power and wisdom as opposed to appearing youthful and full of vigour like a man in his prime.

The very heavy upper eyelids are typical of those found in statuary of Senwosret III, although the eyes themselves are quite small and do not protrude or bulge like those found on many of the king's portraits. The eyes are perhaps more like those of his son, Amenemhat III whose face was usually more rounded in overall shape and with softer features than his father. The eyebrows are not indicated in relief on the present funerary statuette but simply follow the natural contours of the brow. The expansive forehead is fairly flat, although the temples above

The body of the funerary statuette itself is fairly curvaceous in profile with a very pronounced posterior. The lower legs and feet of the figure are missing. The front of the statuette has a single vertical column of a rather shallow and somewhat crudely incised hieroglyphic inscription that gives the name of the owner as Se-hetep-ib-Re (He who satisfies the heart of Re).²

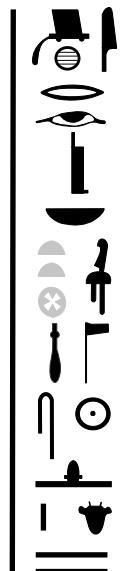
Se-hetep-ib-Re was quite a common name in the Middle Kingdom.³ It was predominantly used for males, indeed Se-hetep-ib-Re was the prenomen or throne name of king Amenemhat I, the first king of the 12th Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom. The name was also used for a few females. Without any titles being given in the inscription it is not possible to identify other objects that could potentially be linked to the owner of this funerary statuette.

To have commissioned a statuette of this quality, this particular Se-hetep-ib-Re was undoubtedly a man of great distinction. There is perhaps a distinct possibility that the figure was the product of a royal workshop, especially with the portrait face that makes this masterpiece of small sculpture quite unique. Examples of other distinguished looking heads on stone funerary statuettes of Middle Kingdom date include one that was sold by Christie's (London) and others that are to be found in museum collections in Cambridge (FWM E.252.1899 & E.641.1954, London (BM EA 32556) and New York (MMA 08.200.17 & 20.2.7). All have very large ears as noted on the royal portraits of Senwosret III and Amenemhat III but none in this selection have the immediately obvious portrait face as seen on the statuette for Se-hetep-ib-Re (see Fig. 2).



Although funerary statuettes were often placed in pairs in tombs during the Middle Kingdom, no other figure for Se-hetep-ib-Re is known.

Inscription



Im3.hyr Wsir nb Imn.tt ntr 3 S-htp-ib-R

The revered one before Osiris, Lord of the West, the Great God, Se-hetep-ib-Re, justified.

Fig. 2. The faces on a selection of funerary statuettes – (a) anonymous (Christie's, 2015), (b) Isi (BM EA 32556), (c) anonymous (FWM E.252.1899), (d) Inhurhotep (FWM E.641.1954), (e) Nebankh (MMA 08.200.17 – from Lisht), anonymous (f) (MMA 20.2.7).

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1. Bourriau, J., *Pharaohs and Mortals. Egyptian art in the Middle Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 100. See also Schneider, H., *Shabtis – An Introduction to the History of Ancient Egyptian Funerary Statuettes with A Catalogue of the Collection of Shabtis in the National Museum of Antiquities at Leiden* 3 vols. (Leiden, 1977), vol. I pp. 182–183.
2. Ranke, H., *Die Ägyptischen Personennamen I* (Glückstadt, 1935), p. 318 (6).
3. See the online database: "Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom and early New Kingdom," https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/people?Aname=%25Htp-ib-Ra&chrono-filter=strictly&relation=same_inscription&start=0#inscriptions_id_nav

Abbreviations

BM	The British Museum (London).
FWM	The Fitzwilliam Museum (Cambridge).
MMA	The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York).

Auction catalogue reference

Christie's (auctioneers, London, New York & Paris): *Antiquities* (London, 15th April, 2015, lot 40).