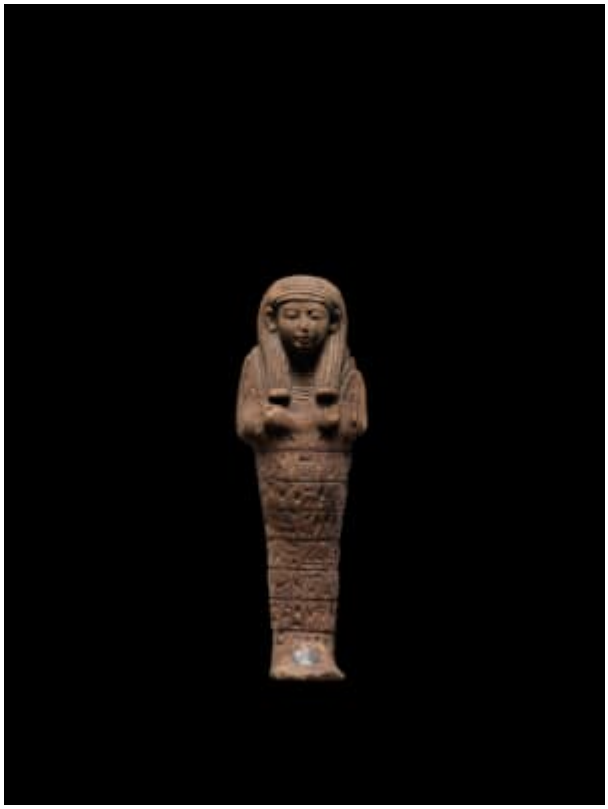


Ushabti for Amenemopet

C. 1390 - 1213 B.C.,

Egypt

Faience

H: 14.5 cm

A cedar wood mummiform ushabti, with a carved hieroglyphic inscription identifying the owner as Amenemopet. The figure wears a striated wig and carries the typical adze and hoe against its chest, with a seed bag suspended in the back from both shoulders. The front features seven lines of sunk relief inscription with traces of light blue pigment. Unfortunately, many wood sculptures found by Bedouin in the 18th and 19th centuries were used as firewood; however, the present piece has survived the ordeal in relatively fine condition.

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.

Condition

Intact, some slight fire damage at the back, general wear.

Literature:

Maurice Nahman Collection, Hotel Drouot, Paris, 4-5 June 1953, Lot 49.

Antiquities, Christie's, 25th April 2007, London, Lot 89.

Egyptian Antiquities, Charles Ede Ltd, 2008, Lot 36.