

DAVID AARON



Ushabti for Ta-Miat

Second Intermediate Period-Early 18th Dynasty, 1630-1540 B.C.

Egypt

Limestone

H: 25.3 cm

A limestone mummiform ushabti. The elongated face projects forwards above the body, lending it great prominence. The sharp features are detailed with deep lines. The interconnected eyebrows and nose are carved in high relief, framing the lower relief eyes with cosmetic lines. Both ears sit in front of the straight wig, which falls just below the length of the small false beard under the chin. The arms are crossed over the chest, in the typical posture for ushabtis. A lotus bud is held in the proper left hand, while the hieroglyph 'sa' is held in the right. The sa was a protective symbol with power in both life and death. The ankh, symbol of life and revival in the afterlife, may have been a modified version of the 'sa'.

The reverse of the ushabti is painted with two columns of hieratic text, to be read left to right, as a short form of Chapter VI of the Book of the Dead:

- 1) "O ye (lit. these) Shawabty* of Ta-Miat**, if I am counted, if Ta-Miat is counted in the Necropolis
- 2) in order to do work there, in order to convey sand of the East to the West, I will do (it)! Here am !! thus

shall you (.k, masculine pronoun***) say.”

Ta-Miat is a feminine name, meaning ‘the she-cat’. Male pronouns and the masculine word ‘shawabty’ itself occur across funerary objects belonging to women – it was not until the 19th Dynasty that ushabtis attempted to differentiate according to sex, except in the occasional use of female pronouns. Egyptian rebirth was framed within the masculine; to be reborn, the deceased body must be shaped into the form of the god Osiris. Coffins identified the deceased with male gods, Osiris and Re, and presented largely androgynous forms. The false beard on this ushabti is in keeping with the Osirian transformation.

Literature:

Antiques, Drouot Richelieu, 6-7 December 1995, cover and Lot 214 B.

12, Rupert Wace Ancient Art, 2012, Lot 6.

XXX, Rupert Wace Ancient Art, Lot 20