

DAVID AARON



Ushabti for Nefer-ib-Re-sa-Neith

H: 16.8 cm

Faience

Egypt

Circa 570-526 BC, Reign of Amasis, 26th Dynasty, Late Period

A turquoise faience ushabti in typical mummiform pose. The arms are crossed over the chest, holding an adze in the proper left hand and a hoe in the right. A sack of grain hangs over the left shoulder, on the figure's back. The ushabti wears a tripartite wig, falling forwards over the shoulder and down the back, and a false beard. The body is incised with ten remaining lines of hieroglyphic inscription (the lowest one partial), which records the name of the deceased 'Nefer-ib-Re-sa-Neith' and extracts from Chapter Six of the Book of the Dead.

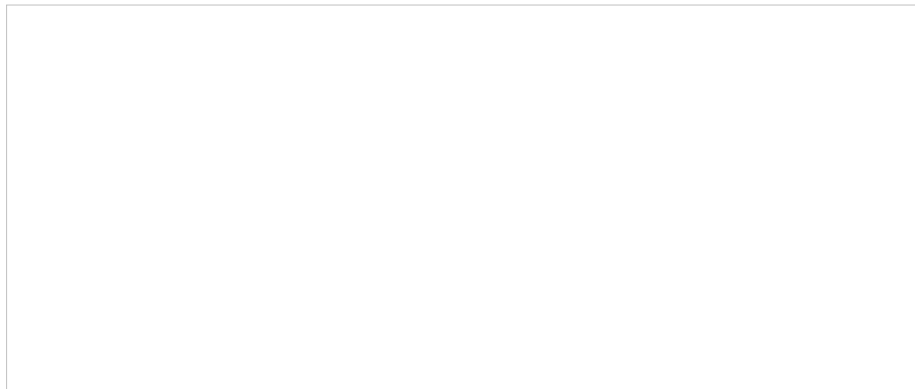


Image: Selection of ushabtis from the tomb of Nefer-ib-re-sa-Neith, Drioton and Lauer, 'Fouilles à Saqqarah', pl. VIII 1.



Image: Plan and sections of the tomb of Nefer-ib-re-sa-Neith. Ét. Drioton and J-P Lauer, 'Fouilles à Saqqarah: Les Tombes Jumelées de Neferibrê-sa-Neith et de Ouahibrê-Men', *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*, 51 (1951), pl. I.

Nefer-ib-re-sa-Neith's name translates as 'Psammetichus II is the son of Neith', which indicates that Nefer-ib-re-sa-Neith was born during the reign of Psammetichus II (r. 595-589 BC). Nefer-ib-re-sa-Neith was the son of a woman named Shepenbastet, and his tomb was discovered in 1929 by British Egyptologist Cecil Mallaby Firth during excavations south of the pyramid of Userkaf at Saqqara. Nefer-ib-re-sa-Neith's tomb was found in the northern vault of a pair of vaulted shaft tombs. Although the tomb had been looted in antiquity, and the mummy removed from the stone coffin, atop the broken lid of the outer sarcophagus were a group of faience ushabtis (most likely originally placed in a box, since burned). Other ushabtis were found in a sand-filled shaft at the western end of the tomb. Firth recorded that 336 ushabtis were found within the tomb, which have since been internationally dispersed through the Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte. Nowadays ushabtis of Nefer-ib-re-sa-Neith can be found in private collections and museums around the world, including the British Museum, London (EA64347), the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin (VÄGM 2014/137), The Indian

Museum Kalkata (65/18), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (58.4.2).

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.