

## AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN STATUETTE FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION IN BRATISLAVA

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The basic characteristics of the ancient Egyptian statuette from a private collection in Bratislava are described in this paper from the point of view of typology, iconography and epigraphy. In this connection related problems are discussed including reconstruction of the damaged inscription, its contents, translation and meaning, as well as the name of the statuette's owner, dating and so on. Moreover, one of the objectives of this research is the investigation of the possible authenticity of this artefact and its ancient origin.

**Key words:** *ushabti*, investigation, iconography, inscription, reconstruction, authenticity

An ancient Egyptian statuette belonging to a private collection has recently appeared in Bratislava. I was asked to investigate this artefact in order to work out its scientific evaluation. The results of this investigation are intended to help to determine the degree of authenticity of the artefact and the possibility of its ancient origin. As an Egyptologist, I use in this paper naturally Egyptological approach to the problem including analytical and comparative methods of research in the context of the technical facilities accessible to me.

Typologically, the statuette belongs to category generally known as *shabti* figures.<sup>1</sup> These figures produced in the mummy-like form were originally deposited mostly in the tombs together with other funeral equipment belonging

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<sup>1</sup> This type of ancient Egyptian statuettes is known under various ancient Egyptian terms, such as *š3bty*, *š3w3bty* or *wšbty* transcribed and vocalized in English as *shabti*, *shawabti* and *ushabti* respectively. See SCHLÖGL, H. *Uschebti*, 896 In: HELCK, W., WESTENDORF, W. (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, Bd. VI; STEWART, H. M. *Egyptian Shabtis*, p. 13.

to the tomb's owner. The artefact under investigation is said to come from Egypt. Its more precise provenance<sup>2</sup> and the circumstances of its acquisition are not known.

Figure 1



Figure 2



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<sup>2</sup> See MALEK, J., *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Statues, Reliefs and Paintings*, Vol. VIII, Part 1, p. xvii.

### General description (figures 1 and 2)

The statuette is sixteen centimetres high and its maximal width in its upper part is five centimetres. The artefact is preserved unbroken. Its basic shape reflects the human mummy-like figure. The blue colour and the glazed surface of the statuette indicate that it could be made of the faience. In this context it should be stressed that no physical analytical techniques, such as XRF (x-ray fluorescence), SEM (scanning electron microscope), AAS (atomic absorption spectrometry) were applied and no tests were carried out.<sup>3</sup> The surface of the artefact is covered with damage in the form of thin cracks, most of which can be found on its back and lateral sides. Some of these cracks and small grooves have yellowish and brownish colours. It seems that the yellowish or brownish colour may come from the environment and material (of unknown composition) in which the artefact was deposited.<sup>4</sup> Some hieroglyphic signs in the inscription partly preserved in the frontal side of the statuette are more or less completely coloured in this way, but not all of them.

The frontal side of the statuette (figure 1) contains several elements of decoration. It can be divided into two parts: the decoration related to the exterior physical appearance of the statuette on its upper part, and the one consisting of the inscription partly preserved on the lower part of the statuette. The back side of the statuette (figure 2) does not show any traces of the plastic decoration.<sup>5</sup> Let us first focus on the upper frontal half of the artefact.

### Exterior physical appearance (figure 3)

The figure has its arms and hands crossed, right over the left. This is the classical position.<sup>6</sup> Sleeves on both arms are indicated by short vertical line in the place of the wrist. The thumb of the left hand seems to be in a slightly higher position than that on the right. The arms are not clearly elaborated. According to Schneider's typology I would incline to type H 28 in his classification.<sup>7</sup> The figure holds in both hands the hoe, the typical agricultural implement.

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<sup>3</sup> NICHOLSON, P. T., PELTENBURG, E. Egyptian faience In NICHOLSON, P. T., SHAW, I. (eds.) *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology*, pp. 192–193.

<sup>4</sup> Physical samples were not taken for analysis and determination of the material composition.

<sup>5</sup> The pillar or bags and baskets are relevant in this context, however, none of them can be observed on the back side of the statuette.

<sup>6</sup> SCHNEIDER, H. D. *Shabtis I*, p. 167.

<sup>7</sup> SCHNEIDER, H. D. *Shabtis I*, p. 168; SCHEIDER, H. D. *Shabtis III*, Fig. 12.

Figure 3



The hoe in the left hand has the broad blade and the one in the right hand has the blunt blade. This situation corresponds to Schneider's type I1 classification.<sup>8</sup> The chest of the figure is adorned with the broad *wsh*-collar<sup>9</sup> that spreads from one shoulder to the other. This semi-circular collar consists of seven rows or bands of beads. The hair/wig forming another distinguished category in Schneider's typology<sup>10</sup> hangs over the front part of the shoulders on both sides. The picture of the back side of the figure (see figure 2) shows that the hair or wig has no special decoration here. There is a simple horizontal line on the level of the shoulders dividing plasticly the head from the rest of the body. The wig on the frontal side is depicted in the form of several vertical lines on both sides.

<sup>8</sup> SCHNEIDER, H. D. *Shabtis I*, p. 170; SCHNEIDER, H. D. *Shabtis III*, Fig. 13.

<sup>9</sup> HANNIG, R. *Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch (2800–950 v. Chr.)*, p. 216.

<sup>10</sup> SCHNEIDER, H. D. *Shabtis I*, pp. 165–167.

These lines do not reach the lowermost ends of the wig. This part of the wig is depicted in the form of a broad horizontal band on both sides.<sup>11</sup> The short vertical lines over the forehead could probably belong to the decoration of a band. The face of the figure is round. It contains all characteristic facial features depicted in the plastic form, such as both ears, eyebrows, relatively big eyes, full cheeks, and further the nose, mouth and chin. The face was not originally decorated by any divine bread attached to the chin as can be seen in many other statuettes of this type.

The inscription (figures 4, 5, 6 and 7)

On the lower part of the statuette below its arms can be found the inscription consisting of the hieroglyphic or semi-hieroglyphic signs. The text is written in five rows. They are separated by six horizontal lines. The orientation of signs is to the right, which means that the inscription is to be read from right to left. The individual signs are imprinted/carved into the surface of the statuette. Unfortunately, because of the major concentration of damage occurring in this part of the statuette, the full reading of the text is not without problems. Therefore, significant lacunae occurring in the inscription disable the full transcription and translation of the text. Furthermore, some signs in certain parts of the inscription cannot be read clearly and this opens up a variety of alternative ways of their reading and reconstruction of individual words. These problems can be partly solved by means of the comparative approach applied to reconstruct the damaged inscription. The existence of the analogous texts can be helpful in this process of research, however, the method can give us only limited results. In this connection it should be noted, that in general, the textual decoration of any ancient-like artefact can be used as a good indicator for its evaluation and the decision whether or not such an artefact is original.

First of all, on the basis of physical observation we assume that the back side of the statuette did not contain any text (see figure 2) at all, and that the beginning and the end of the text in each line reach approximately the lateral sides of the statuette (see figures 5 and 6). The textual analysis clearly shows that the inscription from the point of view of its contents does not consist of the standard *shabti* spell or its variants.<sup>12</sup> Parts of the sentences preserved in the first four lines of the inscription indicate that from the point of view of the contents of the inscription and the mentioned standard spell only the vocative in the form "O, *shabti*" (or rather its variant *ushabti* with/without demonstrative pronoun

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<sup>11</sup> Despite number of examples in Schneider's classification there is no appropriate equivalent corresponding to the characteristics of the described artefact. See SCHNEIDER, H. D. *Shabtis III*, Fig. 11.

<sup>12</sup> STEWART, H. M. *Egyptian Shabtis*, pp. 47–49.

“this/these”) was probably used in this inscription (see also below). From the Late Period on, the use of the term *ushabti* occurs frequently on the statuettes of this kind.<sup>13</sup> Finally, we must bear in mind in this context that, unfortunately, because of the huge damage we do not know the textual composition in the fifth line at all.

Figure 4



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<sup>13</sup> STEWART, H. M. *Egyptian Shabtis*, p. 49.

Figure 5



Figure 6



Transcription of the text



Transliteration of the text

- Line 1: ... *dd(w) n.f Pšmṯk* ...
- Line 2: ... *m<sup>3c</sup>-hrw dd.f i* ...
- Line 3: ... *imy-r3 sš(w)* ...
- Line 4: ... *Pšmṯk* ...
- Line 5: ... .. (illegible)

Translation of the text

- Line 1: ... called Psametik ...
- Line 2: ... justified, he speaks: O ...
- Line 3: ... overseer of the scribes (of) ...
- Line 4: ... Psametik ...
- Line 5: ... .. (illegible)

Commentary to the inscription

Unlike the hieroglyphic transcription of the text on the statuette presented above, in this commentary the individual hieroglyphic signs or those in the following grammatical phrases used below will be written conventionally from left to right.

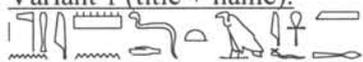
As we have seen, the transcription of the text indicates that its beginning in line 1 is missing. Based on the physical condition of the surface on the lateral side and the existence of the textual analogies, I assume several hieroglyphic signs that can be expected in the space at the very beginning of line 1.

The first group of the preserved legible hieroglyphic signs transcribed as  is grammatically the passive form (participle) of the verb  (*dd*) “speak,

tell, say” usually written with the sign  (*w*) omitted here.<sup>14</sup> The pronoun (*f*) in the phrase *n.f* refers to the masculine singular *dd(w)*. The whole phrase  in this context very probably means “called”. It stands behind the antecedent in a kind of clause where it is used to introduce a person’s nickname, for example “Intef, called Iuseneb”.<sup>15</sup> Such inscriptions also occur on *shabtis*. In our case, such an antecedent in the position of the subject would be missing because of the damage. So, the presented example mentioned above would indicate that the missing part at the beginning of line 1 could be the proper name. The situation, however, might be a little bit more complicated.

The problem of reconstruction of the beginning of line 1 cannot be discussed without the comparative approach. The study of the inscriptions which can be found on *shabtis* reveals that the beginning of the text can have various forms in dependence on its composition, contents and date.<sup>16</sup> In general, according to the texts which occur on the statuettes of this kind, several variants of their beginnings can be distinguished in the attested records. They can be arranged in the several following groups:

Variant 1 (title + name):

 “The priest of Amen, Djed-Mut-iwef-ankh, justified”<sup>17</sup>

Variant 2 (vocative in the form O + *shabti*<sup>18</sup> (or Osiris)):

 “O, *shabti* ...”<sup>19</sup>

Variant 3 (*hetep-di-nisut* formula):

 “A boon which the king gives ...”<sup>20</sup>

Variant 4 (Osiris + title (or without) + name):<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup> ALLEN, J. P. *Middle Egyptian*, pp. 319–344. For the presence of the sign  *t* in this phrase, however, see for example JANES, G. *Shabtis*, pp. 159, 161.

<sup>15</sup> ALLEN, J. P. *Middle Egyptian*, p. 336.

<sup>16</sup> SCHNEIDER, H. D. *Shabtis I*, pp. 78–158; STEWART, H. M. *Shabtis*, pp. 47–51.

<sup>17</sup> JANES, G. *Shabtis*, pp. 137–138.

<sup>18</sup> Or other alternative terms (see note 1) used in singular or plural sometimes accompanied with demonstrative pronoun.

<sup>19</sup> REISER-HASLAUER, E. *Corpus Antiquitatum Aegyptiacarum*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, *Ägyptisch-Orientalische Sammlung*, Lieferung 5, pp. 5,10–5,13.

<sup>20</sup> REISER-HASLAUER, E. *Corpus Antiquitatum Aegyptiacarum*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, *Ägyptisch-Orientalische Sammlung*, Lieferung 5, pp. 5,35–5,38; JANES, G. *Shabtis*, pp. 9–10.



words can fit the lacuna at the beginning of line 1. The width of this space can be given approximately by the group of signs . In my opinion, there are two possible solutions of this problem. Line 1 could start with:

- a) the proper name of the *shabti*'s owner
- b) the name of the god Osiris

These alternatives show that the word standing immediately before the phrase *dd(w) n.f* should be a substantive. If the alternative a) were true, the proper name would consist of few hieroglyphic signs (or just only one). From the point of view of orthography the name of the god Osiris (alternative b) could be written in several ways given by the combination of such signs as , , , , . Thus, this name can have more variants, such as ,  and so on. The combination of the *shedj* + the name of the god Osiris seems to me unlikely because of the insufficient space for placing two words at the beginning of the line 1, though, the word *shedj* can also be written orthographically in several alternative ways, such as , ,  and so on.

The group of signs  in line 1 is followed by the signs written within the oval frame known as the cartouche. The signs within the cartouche give the royal name  "Psametik", the name of three kings of the 26th dynasty.<sup>28</sup> The presence of the royal name on the *shabti* does not mean, however, that the owner of this *shabti* was originally the king himself. There are no indications, either iconographic or textual, that the cartouche on our artefact refers to the royal status of the statuette. In general, the royal titles, epitheta or other phrases usually accompany the cartouche itself.<sup>29</sup> The cartouche with the royal name written on the royal *shabti* is mostly immediately introduced by one of the standard royal titles in the form of   "King of Upper and Lower Egypt" or  "son of Ra".<sup>30</sup> The royal epitheta and phrases include such forms

<sup>28</sup> BECKERATH von, J. Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen, 1984, pp. 111–112, 274–276; SCHNEIDER, T. Lexikon der Pharaonen, pp. 310–314.

<sup>29</sup> Some exceptions may occur. See for example REISER-HASLAUER, E. Corpus Antiquitatum Aegyptiacarum, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, Ägyptisch-Orientalische Sammlung, Lieferung 5, pp. 5, 118–5, 119.

<sup>30</sup> MARTIN, G. T. The Royal Tomb at El-Amarna, Vol. 1, pp. 37–72, Pls. 16–18, 27–30, 33–35, 38–40, 42–44, 46–47.

as,  “lord of the two lands”<sup>31</sup>,  “lord of appearances”<sup>32</sup>, or  “Osiris, the King”<sup>33</sup> and so on.

In ancient Egypt, it was usual that the royal name written within the cartouche formed one component in the whole personal (non-royal) name of a man.<sup>34</sup> Such examples including the name Psametik are also attested in the written records.<sup>35</sup> In such composite personal names, the cartouche can be either preceded or followed by another word or group of words. In fact, the space behind the cartouche in line 1 on our artefact, precisely the surface, indicates that some hieroglyphic signs may have been presented here. However, because of the damage in this part they remain illegible.

The beginning of line 2 is illegible too. The surface here is damaged and the signs cannot be reconstructed. The two vertical signs in this line I read as *m<sup>3</sup>c-hrw* “justified”.<sup>36</sup> It is the abbreviated form derived from the fuller version



This is the standard epithet of the deceased and it frequently occurs in the offering and funerary inscriptions including texts written on *shabtis*. On the basis of the analogous inscriptions coming from *shabtis* one can say that the *m<sup>3</sup>c-hrw* phrase often stands close to the end of the sentence, and it is preceded by the name or nickname of the *shabti*'s owner or his/her filiation. This fact would support the idea that the signs originally standing in the space before the *m<sup>3</sup>c-hrw* phrase on our artefact in line 2 might belong to the nickname or might form the filiation of the *shabti*'s owner.

Another group of legible signs forming one semantic whole and the simple sentence standing behind the *m<sup>3</sup>c-hrw* phrase I transliterate and read as *ddf*. In this word phrase I want to emphasize a peculiar shape of the second sign that

I transcribe as . In fact, the second sign resembles the biliteral sign  *m<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>31</sup> TIRADRITTI, F. (ed.). *The Treasures of the Egyptian Museum*, pp. 216, 282.

<sup>32</sup> MARTIN, G. T. *The Royal Tomb at El-Amarna*, Vol. 1, Pl. 39 (no. 170).

<sup>33</sup> SATZINGER, H. *Das Kunsthistorische Museum in Wien*, pp. 87–88; REISER-HASLAUER, E. *Corpus Antiquitatum Aegyptiacarum*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, Ägyptisch-Orientalische Sammlung, Lieferung 5, pp. 5,103–5,106; KOZLOFF, A. P., BRYAN, B. M. *Egypt's Dazzling Sun. Amenhotep III and His World*, pp. 325–327; BERLEV, O., HODJASH, S. *Catalogue of the Monuments of Ancient Egypt from the Museums of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Bielorussia, Caucasus, Middle Asia and the Baltic States*, p. 83, Pl.108/VII A.8.1, VII A.8.2, VII A.8.3.; AUBERT, J.-F., AUBERT, L. *Statuettes égyptiennes: chaouabtis, ouchebtis*, Pls. 10, 14/31, 25.

<sup>34</sup> RANKE, H. *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*. Band 1, passim.

<sup>35</sup> RANKE, H. *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*. Band 1, pp. 136–137.

<sup>36</sup> ALLEN, J. P. *Middle Egyptian*, p. 95.

rather than . If it really is the sign , so I think that, in such a case its presence here is to be interpreted as the writer's mistake. The first sign I transcribe as  and the third one as . These two signs in combination with the sign , or with one of the signs placed immediately before or behind would give me no sense.<sup>37</sup> The sign transcribed as  in line 2 is not absolutely identical with the one transcribed in line 1. There is a similar sign in the form as follows .<sup>38</sup> It occurs in various words including those expressing titles where it is transliterated as *imy-r3*, a certain equivalent of . Despite this fact, I think, the context and comparative material sufficiently clearly show that this sign is to be transcribed as . Furthermore, we can see the shape of the sign  used in the phrase  and its palaeographic form. This sign evidently differs palaeographically from that transliterated as *d* in line 2.<sup>39</sup> Again, the analogous inscriptions occurring on *shabtis* show us convincingly that the phrase *m3<sup>c</sup>-hrw* is followed very often immediately by another one in the form  *ddf*, that is “he speaks” (it means the *shabti*).<sup>40</sup> So, this word phrase fits into this space much better than any other. The suffix *f* in the position of personal pronoun in this phrase refers again to the sexual identity of the *shabti*,

<sup>37</sup> There is a word  *dm<sup>r</sup>* with the meaning “papyrus”, but the use of this word in line 2 can be excluded from the contextual and other reasons. Cf. HANNIG, R. Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch, p. 1006; ERMAN, A., GRAPOW, H. Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache, Band V, p. 574.

<sup>38</sup> Cursive forms of both discussed signs can be very similar, however, palaeographically there is a difference between them. See MÖLLER, G. Hieratische Paläographie, Band 3, pp. 14, 28.

<sup>39</sup> As for the shape of the sign , see JANES, G. *Shabtis*, p. 51. In general, the differences can occur in writing of the same signs on the same monuments. See for example JANES, G. *Shabtis*, passim.

<sup>40</sup> See for example JANES, G. *Shabtis*, pp. 18, 159; BRUNNER-TRAUT, E., BRUNNER, H. *Corpus Antiquitatum Aegyptiacarum. Die ägyptische Sammlung der Universität Tübingen*. Band 1, p. 280, Taf. 123/899; NEWBERRY, P. E. *Funerary Statuettes*, p. 168; SCHNEIDER, H. D. *Shabtis I, II, III*, passim. VACHALA, B. *Ein Uschebti des Zeichners Parahotep aus Deir el-Medineh*, GM 205, pp. 103–109.

or more precisely of its owner. The occurrence of this personal pronoun indicates clearly that the owner of our *shabti* should be male and not female.<sup>41</sup>

In my opinion, another two signs behind the group  in the same line are legible and can be transcribed as . They represent the beginning of the new sentence. These signs grammatically are an interjection. They introduce the vocative phrase and are usually translated as "O".<sup>42</sup> The comparative inscriptions from the orthographical point of view also contain another variant of the sign in the form of the standing figure , however, this is not the case of the sign occurring in line 2.<sup>43</sup>

Behind the sign  another one is indicated. It seems that its oblong shape runs from up down and from right to left. Its upper part resembles the sign , however, this might not be so. The analogies and comparative texts can be helpful here again. They show that the vocative phrase introduced by the signs  or by their other variants continues with the subject in the form of the substantive. In general, this substantive in our context is the word *shabti* or its variants. As mentioned above, the occurrence of the name Psametik indicates that the artefact might have come from at least the 26th dynasty. The usage of the term *ushabti* instead of *shabti* is more common and typical for the Late Period and it occurs frequently on the statuettes of this type (see above).<sup>44</sup> Writing of the word *ushabti* may take several alternative forms, such as    , and is often written with the plural strokes.<sup>45</sup> What is important to emphasize here in our context is the occurrence of the sign  at the beginning of the word *ushabti*. In my opinion, the damaged sign standing behind the signs

<sup>41</sup> In case of a female owner of *shabti* the phrase should have the form *dd.s*, see for example SCHMIDT, H. C., WILLEITNER, J. Nefertari. Gemahlin Rameses' II, p. 97, Abb. 133; JANES, G. Shabtis, pp. 12–13, and *passim*. This feature, however, is not an absolutely reliable indicator. There are some examples of *shabtis* belonging to women with inscriptions containing the male personal pronoun instead of the female in the phrase *dd.f*. See for example PAGE-GASSE, M., WIESE, A. B. (eds.). Ägypten. Augenblicke der Ewigkeit, p. 195; JANES, G. Shabtis, pp. 149–150.

<sup>42</sup> ALLEN, J. P. Egyptian Grammar, p. 195.

<sup>43</sup> SCHNEIDER, H. D. Shabtis III, *passim*.

<sup>44</sup> SCHNEIDER, H. D. Shabtis I, pp. 119, 138.

<sup>45</sup> BÖHM, B. Die Uschebtis des Psammetich, Sohn der Mer(et)-Neith. GM 206, pp. 7–23; SCHNEIDER, H. D. Shabtis II, III, *passim*.

 could be theoretically the sign  as a part of the word *ushabti*. The other signs forming this word, in my opinion, should continue in the new line.<sup>46</sup>

As in the previous cases, line 3 begins with a damaged surface. This, in theory, offers a possibility for inserting several signs into this lacuna. They, in my opinion, could form the word *ushabti*, as mentioned above.

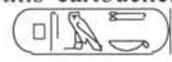
The legible signs in the same line that I transcribe in the form  would represent the title of the *shabti*'s owner "overseer of the scribes". However, the title seems incomplete because of the damage in the following part. By direct genitive it could be theoretically connected with the other words, signs of which are damaged and illegible on the surface. Among the analogous inscriptions I found one which contains the title translated "overseer of the scribes of the

Great Prison".<sup>47</sup> Its hieroglyphic version is as follows: . The title is written on the *shabti* belonging to a certain man known as Udja-Hor and this *shabti* is dated to the reign of Psametik II.<sup>48</sup> It is interesting to note that the nickname of this man contains the name of Psametik written within the cartouche. The full nickname of the man Udja-Hor reads as follows

. Furthermore, his nickname is divided and written at the end of line one and the beginning of line two on his *shabti*.<sup>49</sup> The structure of

the damage of the signs behind the word  on our artefact together with the length of the space indicate that the signs as those attested in the title  mentioned above could be used here too.

The surface of line 4 is very damaged. Despite this fact the shape of the cartouche can be recognized in the central part of this line (see detail in figure 7). Although the whole space is damaged it is possible to recognize the traces of individual signs written within this cartouche. They form the same name as

mentioned in line 1, namely  "Psametik". Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that very probably the nickname of the *shabti*'s owner is repeated here once again. It is not quite clear whether some signs precede the cartouche or not. This possibility cannot be excluded, although the surface at this place does not reflect traces of any significant indication. On the other

<sup>46</sup> One word can be cut into two parts. See for example JANES, G. *Shabtis*, pp. 17-18.

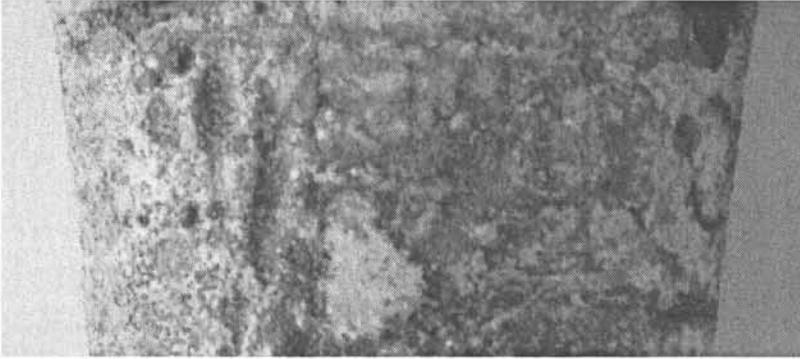
<sup>47</sup> JANES, G. *Shabtis*, p. 159.

<sup>48</sup> JANES, G. *Shabtis*, pp. 158, 160; As for the length of reign of this pharaoh see HORNUNG, E., KRAUSS, R., WARBURTON, D. A. (eds.). *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, p. 494.

<sup>49</sup> JANES, G. *Shabtis*, pp. 159 and 161.

hand, the surface behind the cartouche reflects the traces of damage, but despite this fact some signs might occur here and belong to the nickname. Compared with line 1 we can notice the similar situation. Immediately behind the cartouche in the upper part a small pit of an oblong vertical shape indicating a hieroglyphic sign can be seen, the exact sort of which, unfortunately, cannot be determined precisely.

Figure 7



Line 5 is very damaged again and, unfortunately, no concrete legible signs can be recognized on the surface and transcribed. In the standard spell, the inscription usually ends with the text in the form as follows


 “here I am, you shall say” (or its variants).<sup>50</sup>

### Conclusions

The artefact under investigation belongs typologically to the category of the ancient Egyptian statuettes generally known as *shabtis*. The iconography of the artefact is authentic. The comparative records used in the description and analysis clearly reveal several analogous iconographic features with original ancient Egyptian artefacts of this type. The epigraphy of the inscription is authentic. The inscription itself written in five horizontal rows is damaged and incomplete. Despite this fact, several parts of the inscription are, however, legible. They contain a cartouche with the name “Psametik” and parts of standard phrases which occur occasionally in this sort of inscription. The personal name of the owner of this artefact cannot be stated. It can be said with

<sup>50</sup> STEWART, H. M. *Shabtis*, pp. 48–49; Cf. SCHNEIDER, H. D. *Shabtis* II, III, *passim*.

a certain degree of probability that the nickname of the original owner of this statuette could consist of several words including the mentioned cartouche with the name "Psametik". It seems unlikely that the statuette can be interpreted as the royal *shabti*. Some damaged parts of the inscription can be partly reconstructed with the help of the comparative inscriptions. Going out from the textual analysis and commentary to the inscription, the whole reconstruction of the inscription can include several variants.

Formal dating can be stated at least to the 26th dynasty (664–525 B.C.).<sup>51</sup> This can be formally claimed on the basis of some specific features of the iconography, composition and contents of the inscription and, mainly, because of the presence of the cartouche with the name "Psametik". On the basis of these facts it would be perhaps better to describe the statuette rather by the term *ushabti* than *shabti*.

Based on the known facts, it is not possible to rigorously decide the problem of authenticity of this artefact and its ancient origin. No circumstances relevant to the acquisition are known, no samples were taken and no physical tests were carried out.<sup>52</sup> In this connection it will be useful to remember that statuettes of various types were/are produced in Egypt also in modern times and they were/are sold to tourists as souvenirs. The quality of some is on a very high level. The producers of such "modern antiquities" try to imitate the physical features of the originals as much as possible attempting to give them the ancient exterior visage. And sometimes, thanks to their skills, they are very successful. Sometimes the antiquities are replicated according to two-dimensional pictures of originals published anywhere in the magazines and books. Such a business is a source of income for those people involved in this kind of social activity.

In general, every artefact without its archaeological context represents a dramatic loss of information very important for its rigorous evaluation and authenticity. I have not found any *shabti* of identical shape, iconography and inscription comparable exactly with that described in this paper. Search for further comparable material of this kind may bring some new evidence and information to prove or disprove the conclusions presented in this paper. Furthermore, physical tests of the material coming from the discussed artefact might also shed more light on the problem of the ancient or modern origin of the statuette.

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<sup>51</sup> HORNING, E., KRAUSS, R., WARBURTON, D. A. (eds.). *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, p. 494.

<sup>52</sup> See note 4.

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