Study of a Shabti of Senkamanisken from the Royal Ontario Museum

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Introduction

I chose to translate a shabti, an Egyptian funerary figurine, from the Royal Ontario Museum - actually, a replica of the shabti that belongs to the interactive children’s gallery called the CIBC Discovery Gallery (see Figures 1 and 2). The original shabti is currently on display in the museum as well, in the Nubian section of the Gallery of Africa. Its accession number is 926.15.1 (“Shabti of King Senkamanisken”).
The shabti is 17.8 centimetres tall, 7 centimetres wide and 3 centimetres thick. The Royal Ontario Museum’s collections website states that it is likely made of serpentine or ankerite (“Stela of King Senkamanisken”), a material that was used for other Napatan shabtis as well, such as one belonging to King Taharqa (“Stela of King Taharqa”).

It belonged to, and represents, the Nubian King Senkamanisken, about whom more information is included below. The king is depicted wearing the royal *nemes* headdress topped with a double uraeus, and a braided false beard. He also wears a thick collar or
pectoral necklace. Joyce L. Haynes and Ronald Leprohon’s study *Napatan Shawabtis in the Royal Ontario Museum* describes several other features of the original shabti that are not visible on the replica I worked with, namely that the king is holding a bladed hoe in his right hand and a broad one in the left and has a seed bag slung over his left shoulder (Haynes and Leprohon 1987, 19). There is also an *ankh* incised into the base of the statuette. The text is written over six horizontal lines, written right to left, separated by engraved lines (Leprohon, 1987, 19).

Hieroglyphic text

This is the text as it appears on the shabti; divided into six lines as they are inscribed.

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Transliteration and translation

Here I have divided the text into different lines than above, based on what I judge to be the most apparent sentences:

shd wsw nfr nb t3wy šḥpr-n-Rw m3-ḥrw
May the Osiris, the Good God, the Lord of the Two Lands Sekheperenre, justified, be illuminated
dd³ i šbty
He says, “O shabti!”

ip·t³ ir ḫsb·t³ wsir nsw snk³-Imn-skn pw m³-ḥrw
If one counts, if one reckons the Osiris, King Senkamanisken, justified

r irt³ k3t nb irt³ im m ḫrt-n trà
To do all the works that are to be done there in the necropolis,

r srwd³ sḥt r smḥy³ wδbw
To cultivate the fields, to irrigate the riparian lands

r ḫnt³ šy n i3bt t r imnt t ts p ḫr
To transport sand of the East to the West and vice versa

iry·i mk wi k3·k³
“I will do it! Here I am!” you shall say.

Grammar notes

a) prospective sdm·f as a main clause wish/exhortation, see Hoch’s *Middle Egyptian Grammar* §72 (88)

b) circumstantial main clause sdm·f

c) sdm·tw, in this case the tw is the indefinite particle ‘one’ rather than making the verb a passive

d) sdm·tw, in this case the tw is the indefinite particle ‘one’ rather than making the verb a passive

e) future tense r sdm·f

f) “irt im m ḫrt-n trà” is a participle, the subject being “k3t”; “the works”

g) future tense r sdm·f

h) future tense r sdm·f
Notes on the names

The two names given, Sekheperenre and Senkamanisken, are the prenomen and nomen of Senkamanisken, respectively (“Senkamanisken”). They are both written using honorific transposition, with the gods’ names (Rê and Imn) appearing at the beginning of the cartouche.

The name Sekheperenre was also used by a Fourteenth Dynasty Egyptian king although his was spelled slightly differently, including the r and n as (von Beckerath 1984, 110). According to Leprohon in The Great Name: Ancient Egyptian Royal Titulary (Leprohon 2013, 217) this name means “The One Whom Re Has Brought Into Being”. It consists of the sdm·n·f form of the verb šmpr and the god’s name Rê. I believe the whole name is a participle, with “The One” functioning as an unwritten antecedent.

His nomen Senkamanisken is much more enigmatic. From what I can tell it does not seem to be composed of Egyptian words; it could possibly be a transliteration into hieroglyphs of a native Kushite name or phrase.

He also had a Horus name, Two Ladies Name and Golden Horus name which are not included on the shabti. These are supplied by Török (1997, 201), with English translations. They are presented below, with brief grammatical commentary of my own:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horus name</td>
<td>ŠHR-ʔ3WY</td>
<td>Pacifier of the Two Lands</td>
<td>Nominal form of the verb ŠHR, ‘to make content’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Ladies name</td>
<td>ḫr-ḥr-m3t</td>
<td>Who Appears in Equity</td>
<td>The initial verb is ḫr, which usually means ‘to appear (in glory)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Horus name</td>
<td>WSR-PHTY</td>
<td>Whose Strength Is Mighty</td>
<td>Two nouns in bound construction, ie ‘x of y’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Two Ladies and Golden Horus names are also possible particles, with the unmentioned ‘one’ for the king as the antecedent.

**The prayer**

This text is, as is commonly found on shabtis, a version of Chapter Six of the Book of the Dead. Also called the Book of Going Forth By Day, this is a collection of funerary texts often found copied on papyrus in burials (Leisko 2005). Some sections of this book are magical/religious spells to cause various effects, including this one which is intended to ‘animate’ the shabti so it can answer any summons and perform its work.

According to Hans D. Schneider’s classification, this version of the text is Version VIIA, which is the standard of Late Period shabtis (Schneider 1977, 120). However, there are some differences: in Schneider’s version the word ushebti is used while shabti is employed here, and there is no demonstrative pronoun after the word as all his variants of the version have (see Schneider 1977, 121 - most are “these ushebtis” or “this ushebti”). The most striking
difference is its lack of what Schneider calls the ‘obstacle clause’, a sentence along the lines of “now indeed, obstacles are implanted therewith” (Schneider 1977, 121). This would usually come after “to do all the works that are to be done there in the necropolis” whereas this text jumps straight to description of said tasks. The use of the word $pw$ before $m3^{-hrw}$ after the king’s names is also unusual.

Shabtis

*Shabti* is one of three names for a particular type of ancient Egyptian funerary statuette, the other two being *shawabti* and *ushebti* (Schneider 1977, 2). They are small statuettes representing either mummies or still-living people whose purpose was to work for the deceased by performing any tasks needed in the afterlife (Spanel, 2005).

The history of shabtis begins with the appearance of statuettes of servants in Old Kingdom tombs and linen-wrapped wax mummy figurines in Herakleopolitan burials at Saqqara. During the Middle Kingdom these began to be made of stone, and during either the Thirteenth or Seventeenth Dynasty some begin to be inscribed with a short version of Chapter Six of the Book of The Dead. In the Eighteenth Dynasty other materials began to be used, including wood, faience, terracotta, metal and rarely, glass. During this time the Book of the Dead inscription grew longer, and numbers found within individual tombs grew from “a few” to dozens to hundreds (Spanel, 2005). It was during the reign of Thutmose IV that the agricultural tools seen in this example came into use, with some carrying baskets, sacks, hoes and mattocks (Spanel, 2005).
Schneider (1977, 43) describes the spell written on the shabti figurine as being

“conceived in order to minimize the risk of being called upon for manual labour. It was a magical means by which the master was substituted by others, if his name happened to be mentioned at the roll-calls.”

In addition to being a magic spell, the text serves as a legal document, “a kind of decree in miniature” (Schneider 1977, 43). The act of writing it on the shabti itself records the ‘contract’ between it and the owner and binds it to perform the described tasks.

In the Kushite kingdom, shabtis were only produced for kings; no non-royal burials excavated have yet to contain any (Haynes and Leprohon 1987, 22). They were also distributed with precise positioning, placed against the tomb walls and sarcophagus. This is in contrast to the Egyptian method, in which they were buried in more varied spots (Haynes and Leprohon 1987, 23). A number of other characteristics distinguish Kushite shabtis from their Egyptian counterparts, some of which can be seen in this example. The Kushites revived an earlier Egyptian practice of using hard stone for shabti construction, which by Dynasty 25 had not been used in Egypt for 400 years (Haynes and Leprohon 1987, 23). Another antiquated feature they adopted was the nemes headdress. Atop his on this shabti, Senkamanisken sports a double uraeus cobra - this is a common feature in Kushite royal statuary but he is the only one whose shabtis wear it (Haynes and Leprohon 1987, 24). The single seed bag it carries is also characteristic of his, and indeed shabtis holding bags at all is a unique Kushite feature, although most have two rather than his one. The bags used are distinctly Kushite as well in their shape and use of tassels along the bottom edge (Haynes and Leprohon 1987, 25).
Senkamanisken

Senkamanisken was the eighth king of Kush, whose reigned between 640-620 BCE (Kendall, 1997). As László Török explains (1997, 362) the archaeological and textual evidence of his reign is scant.

He and his father Atlanersa (c. 650-640 BCE) collaborated to construct a temple dedicated to Amun at the site of Jebel Barkal, near Khartoum, referred to as Temple B700 (see Figure 3). Besides the obvious religious connection, the temple was also distinctly Egyptian-style in decoration and housed a finely carved stand for Amun’s sacred barque which was carried out for special ceremonies. It had two main rooms behind a porch and pylon (Kendall, 1997). Senkamanisken also built three colossal cultic statues within the temple (Török 1997, 364).

Figure 3. Plan of Temple B700 at Jebel Barkal (image by Timothy Kendall, “Temple B700: A Brief History”)
The Kingdom of Kush

The area known to the Egyptians as Kush, part of modern-day Sudan became independent from Egypt during the eighth century BCE under a native monarchy based in the city of Napata (Kendall, 2005). Although they conquered and began to rule Egypt in 712 BCE as the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, they were expelled by Assyrians in 663 BCE and re-established power at Napata and Meroë. From here emerged the Napatan Period, whose culture, including funerary practices and language, were heavily influenced by Egypt (Kendall, 2005).

The Egyptian influence on funerary beliefs can be seen starting with the tomb of Tanwetamani (c. 664-656 BCE). Paintings on the walls of the two chambers in his tomb show scenes of the king in the afterlife, ones which are “purely Egyptian” according to Derek A. Welsby (1996, 93) as are representations of the sky goddess Nut and uraei. The first king to have a triple-chambered tomb was Senkamanisken, who was buried in a pyramid at the royal necropolis at Nuri. Its two outer rooms were inscribed with texts from the Book of the Dead, including the Negative Confessions (Welsby 1996, 93).

Pyramids were not the only Egyptian funerary practice that was popular with Napatan kings. King Piye (c. 760-747 BCE) had earlier adopted the use of shabtis and had over 60 inscribed with his name (Welsby 1996, 87). Senkamanisken’s grandfather Taharqa (c.690-664 BCE)\(^1\) had over 1070 of them, made from granite, alabaster and ankerite (Taylor 1991, 45). Senkamanisken himself had a total of 1277 - over three times the average number found in contemporary Egyptian burials (Taylor 1991, 45). Of these, 410 were made of stone, including this one, while the rest were faience (Haynes and Leprohon 1987, 23). The

\(^1\) Dates are provided by Török (1997, 201)
manufacture of shabtis, likely including the one in study, was done locally as a number of moulds were found in the Temple of Amun in the town of Sanam (Welsby 1996, 168).

This shabti therefore is a piece of evidence for the adoption and importance of Egyptian culture, art, religious beliefs and royal iconography in Late Period Kush. Its features that set it apart from contemporary, comparable shabtis, and unique features that are shared by others belonging to Senkamanisken suggest some individuality, something that could be illuminated by further study of him and his reign. The text itself further belies the adoption of Egyptian royal titulary and religious associations by Kushite kings.
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