

**The ushabtis of Wah-ib-Ra-mery-Ptah  
Son of Iret-Iru**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *Introduction to this study*

This study provides an overview of the published ushabtis for Wah-ib-Ra-mery-Ptah<sup>1</sup>. In addition to the few published examples I added the ushabtis I have come across in the world. Although the list of parallels is as comprehensive as possible, additional examples will surely be discovered. I will start off with a short introduction of the ancient owner, if known at all, and describe his ushabtis.

### 1.2 *Who was Wah-ib-Ra-mery-Ptah?*

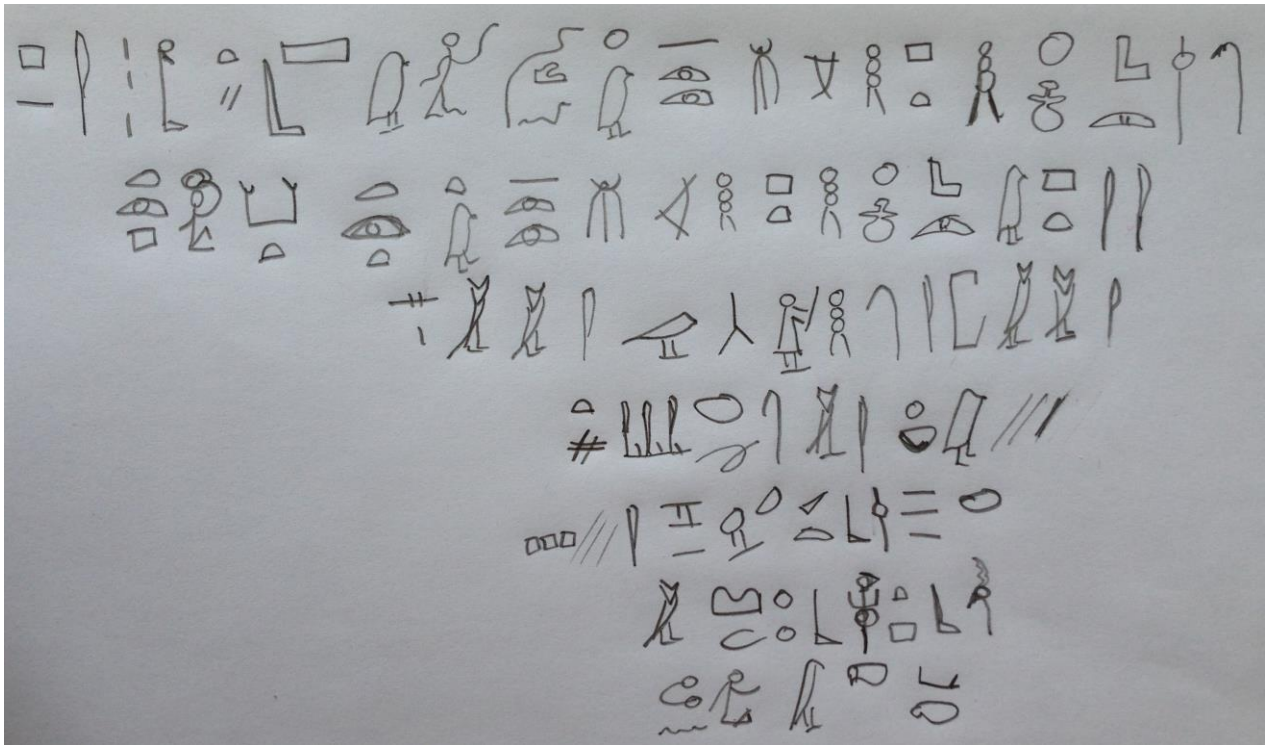
Unfortunately little is known about the owner Wah-ib-Ra-mery-Ptah as only his ushabtis have survived as far as we know at the moment. Based on the iconography of the ushabti and his name that likely contained the name of a ruling pharaoh I would estimate that he lived around 525 BC (with some 50 years margin). The workmanship of the ushabtis is very similar to other ushabtis found in tombs at Saqqarra. His exact tomb location is currently unknown. Based on the provenance from some of the ushabtis it is likely that his tomb was uncovered between 1900 and the 1930's and perhaps lost again at a later stage.

### 1.3 *Description of the ushabtis of Wah-ib-Ra-mery-Ptah*

The ushabtis for Wah-ib-Ra-mery-Ptah are good of quality for the period. The group consists of at least four separately identifiable moulds (see next paragraph). In size they vary between 18.0 and 19.6 centimeters. The inscription consists of chapter six of the book of the dead: "The illuminated one, the Osiris, Wah-ib-Ra-mery-Ptah, born to Iret-iru, true of voice, he speaks: O ushabti" (rest of chapter six follows). For an example of the inscriptions, below the glyphs of one of the Vatican museum ushabtis (inventory number 19349):

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful for the help provided by the Musei Vaticani and especially to Dr. Alessia Amenta for allowing me access to the vaults for research and publication of these pieces.



The original colour of the ushabtis was (light) blue, like on all the ushabtis from this period. The faience has now turned green/brown on most places. Many examples are either chipped, broken or fragmented.

#### *1.4 How many moulds were made and how many artists worked on these ushabtis?*

In my study of the ushabtis of Psamtek son of Mery-Neith<sup>2</sup> I came to the following conclusions (for as far as relevant for this publication):

- A) Late Period ushabti sets consisted of a least 365 examples to match the days of the year.
- B) In most cases Late Period ushabtis sets consisted of some 400 ushabtis as the sum of the alleged combination of 365 workers plus 36 overseers that existed in the TIP period. It was a general concept (so the numbers are not always exactly followed) and in most cases this concept was transferred to the Late Period, sometimes with still some 36 “overseers” in the form of extra large ushabtis, or fully inscribed examples versus partly inscribed ushabtis, and so on. In some other Late Period ushabti sets such a difference was not made and just 400 similar ushabtis were made.

<sup>2</sup> *Psamtek – son of Mery Neith*, N. de Haan & I. Waanders, Shabti Collections Publications, Voorhout, 2013.

C) Between 7 and 18 different artists worked on the production of the ushabtis of Psamtek whereby each artist worked (almost) exclusively on a single mould of which they produced and worked on multiple examples.

With that knowledge I compared the ushabti production of Wah-ib-Ra-mery-Ptah whereby the strength of the results of this study is limited due to the small amount of pieces known for this owner.

First I looked at the separately identifiable moulds. Required for the identification of separate mould as such is that there at least two unique features in comparison to other ushabtis for the same owner.

Mould A:



**Vatican (19349, 19381, 19406)**



Some of the of mould characteristics are that the seize is between 18.5 and 19.5 centimeter<sup>3</sup>, the ushabtis have a long face with chubby cheeks and especially large eyes. The mould has considerable space between the wig/beard and the hands. The hands are far apart. The body is relatively wide/curved.

Mould B :



**Amiens (88.3.105) Vatican (19372, 19385)**

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<sup>3</sup> This difference is quite large for one mould. One would expect smaller differences, although differences always occur based on elements such as the place of the ushabti in the over. Another explanation could be a different way (incorrect) of measuring the length of the piece.

Some of the of mould characteristics are that the seize is between 18.2 and 19.6 centimeter, the ushabtis have a square face with normal eyes. The mould has very limited space between the wig/beard and the hands. The hands are close together. The body is relatively long/straight. A fourth example is probably the private collection example published by Chappaz, see Chapter 3 below, as 43.34.

Mould C :



**(Vatican, 19383)**

Some of the mould characteristics are that the seize is 19.7 centimeter, the ushabti has a small square face with chubby cheeks and normal eyes. The mould has a normal space between the wig/beard and the hands. The hands form a V. The body is relatively wide at the top and more straight from the middle downwards.

Mould D :



(ex Slothouwer, NH, NGA)

Some of the of mould characteristics are that the seize is between 18 and 19 centimeter, the ushabtis have a standard face with normal eyes. The mould has considerable space between the wig/beard and the hands. The hands are far apart. The body is relatively wide and straight.

#### *Conclusion on the amount of moulds used*

For the ushabtis in this publication at least 4 different moulds were used. A number could not separately be identified so the amount of moulds for ushabtis is at least between 4 and 8.

There were very likely between 365 and 400 ushabtis made for this owner. Psamtek son of Mery-Neith had at least 7 identifiable moulds (determined from some 50 examples) and the priest Horudja found in Hawara by Petrie had at least 17 identifiable moulds (based on a



complete set of 399 ushabtis). As we now have already 4 moulds from this small group of identified ushabtis for Wah-ib-Ra-mery-Ptah it is highly likely that the amount of moulds for him is larger than 4. Of course additional research when more examples of his ushabtis are discovered in museum or private collections is necessary to determine this amount precisely.

#### *Conclusion amount of scribes working on the ushabtis*

From the Psamtek son of Mery-Neith study it follows that each ushabti from one mould was exclusively inscribed by one scribe<sup>4</sup>. Although a full study of all the inscriptions is required to safely conclude the same for the ushabtis of Wah-ib-Ra-mery-Ptah, initial research leads to the same conclusion. One of the easiest things to compare are the drawing of the W (chicken) and M (owl) birds. For example, compare the W-hieroglyph on the B-mould with that on the D-mould.



(B-mould: Normal body, normal legs, normal feet)



(D-mould: Body just a stroke, extreme long feet)

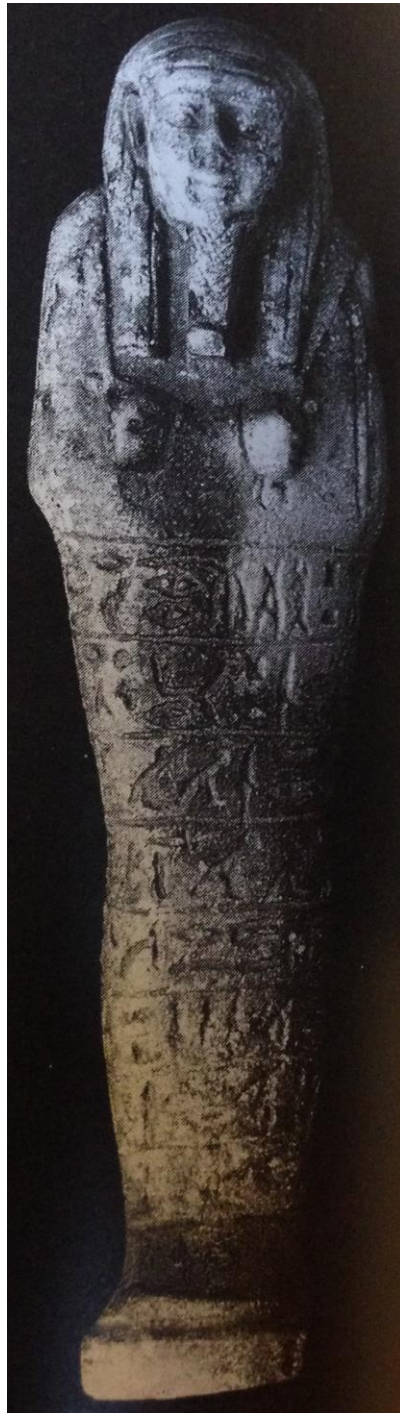
In conclusion, for Wah-ib-Ra-mery-Ptah it is a likely scenario that also here each scribe worked exclusively on one mould. Future discoveries of other examples for this owner will give us more details on the total amount of scribes.

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<sup>4</sup> With only one exception as published in *Psamtek – son of Mery Neith*

## 2. Museum examples

### Amiens, Musée de Picardie



Published: La collection Egyptienne du Musée de Picardie, page 88.

Inventory Number: 88.3.105

Provenance: Unknown.

Height: 18.2 CM

Comments: Likely mould of the B-series. Chipped at nose. Faience turned to brown at most places according to the publication.

**Brooklyn, New York, Brooklyn Museum**



Published: Online at <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/116881>

Inventory Number: 37.173E

Provenance: Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund

Height: Unknown (website mentions 8.3 cm, but that must be mistaken)

Comments: Likely mould of the D-series. Chipped at head and beard. Faience faded to greenish white on front of figure. Glaze on back is largely gone according to the online publication.

**Exeter, Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery**



Published: Online at <https://rammcollections.org.uk/object/5-1946-604/>

Inventory Number: 5/1946/604

Provenance: It belonged to Lieutenant Colonel Montague who collected over 800 classical archaeological objects, which he bequeathed to the museum on his death.

Height: Unknown

Comments: Mould uncertain. Quite a lot of blue faience still present.

**Parkes, Canberra, National Gallery of Art**



Published: Online at :

Inventory Number: NGA 91.1610

Provenance: acquired in Luxor, Egypt, probably by Major Robert Grenville Gayer-Anderson, Pasha, between 1907 and 1944 held in the collection of Colonel Thomas Gayer Gayer-Anderson and Major Robert Grenville Gayer-Anderson, Pasha, both of The Little Hall, Lavenham, Suffolk, England who gave it to the Commonwealth of Australia, 3 June 1954 held by National Library of Australia, Canberra, after transfer from London, 1954-1991 transferred to the collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 1991

Height: 18.2 CM

Comments: Mould D. Arguably the best preserved example with larger pieces of the original blue still present.





MGE-19349



MGE-19349

Published: No.

Inventory Number: 19349

Provenance: Unknown, the Vatican records do not contain the original date of acquisition.

Height: 19.0 CM

Comments: Mould of the A-serie. Chipped at beard, nose and hands and back pillar. Faience turned to green, brown and white at most places. Some spots still contain the original blue (front/leftside of the pedestral).



Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Egizio



MGE-19381



MGE-19381

Published: No.

Inventory Number: 19381

Provenance: Unknown, the Vatican records do not contain the original date of acquisition.

Height: 18.5 CM

Comments: Mould of the A-series. Small chips tips to pedestral, otherwise excellent. Faience turned to green at most places. Large spots still contain the original blue (especially the head).

Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Egizio



MGE-19406





MGE 19406

Published: No.

Inventory Number: 19406

Provenance: Unknown, the Vatican records do not contain the original date of acquisition.

Height: 19.5 CM

Comments: Mould of the A-series. Baking cracks in the center, otherwise intact. Faience turned to green, brown and white at most places. Some spots still contain the original blue (especially the midsection). There is a peculiar gold-like encrustation on the back pillar.

Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Egizio



MGE 19372



MGE 19372

Published: *Les statuettes Funeraires du Museo Gregoriano Egizio*, Jean-Claude Grenier, 1996, page 49 and plate XXXII.

Inventory Number: 19372

Provenance:

Height: 19.0 CM

Comments: Mould of the B-series. Intact. Faience turned to green, brown and white at most places. Some spots still contain the original blue (especially the upper part of the back).





MGE 19385



MGE 19385

Published: No.

Inventory Number: 19385

Provenance: Unknown, the Vatican records do not contain the original date of acquisition.

Height: 19.6 CM

Comments: Mould of the B-series. Intact. Faience turned to green, brown and white, especially at the right side. Most of the front of the piece still contains the original blue, albeit slightly more turquoise in this case.





MGE 19383



MGE 19383

Published: No.

Inventory Number: 19383

Provenance: Unknown, the Vatican records do not contain the original date of acquisition.

Height: 19.7 CM

Comments: Mould of the C-series. Nose chipped, otherwise intact. Faience turned to green, brown, especially at the head and feet area side. Most of the front of the piece still contains the original blue.



### 3. Private collections

#### NH collection





Published: No

Collection: NH 233

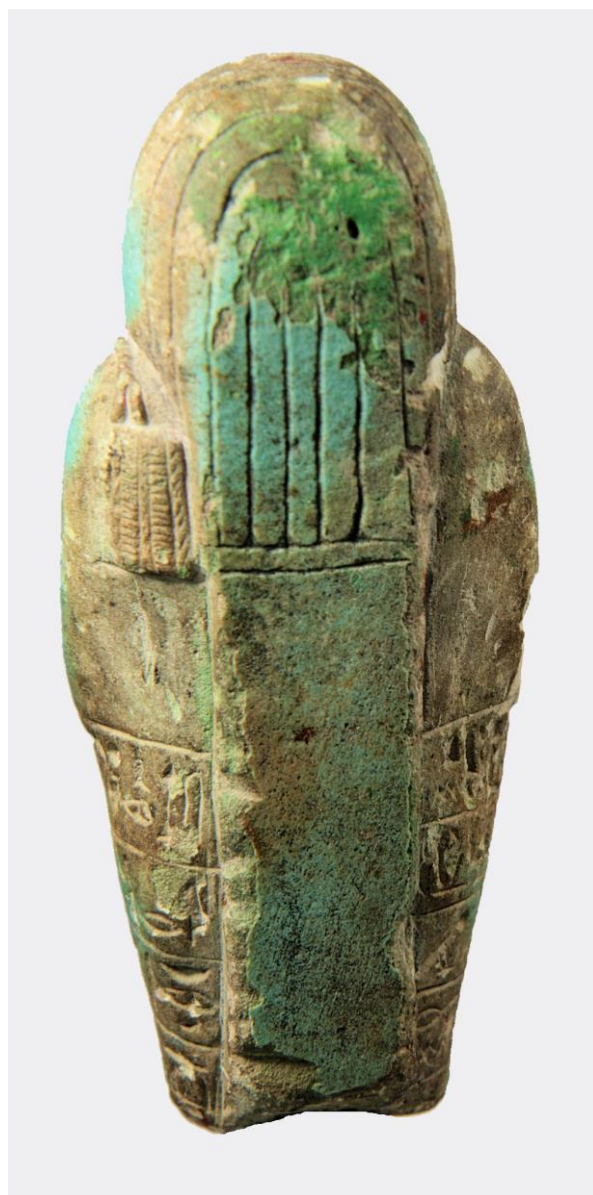
Provenance: Ex Sotheby's, ex USA dealer, Ex collection RB, USA, to current owner in the Netherlands

Height: 17.5-18.0 CM

Comments: Mould D. Intact. Faience considerably worn.



**RSE collection**







Published: No.

Collection: RSE in Sweden.

Provenance: Ex. private collection: Devon, UK; acquired early 20th Century. Sold by Helios Gallery in 2014 to current owner.

Height: 12.6.CM

Comments: Mould D. Lower half missing. Chipped at various places, including nose and hand. Faience turned to green, white and brown.

**TZ collection**



Published: No

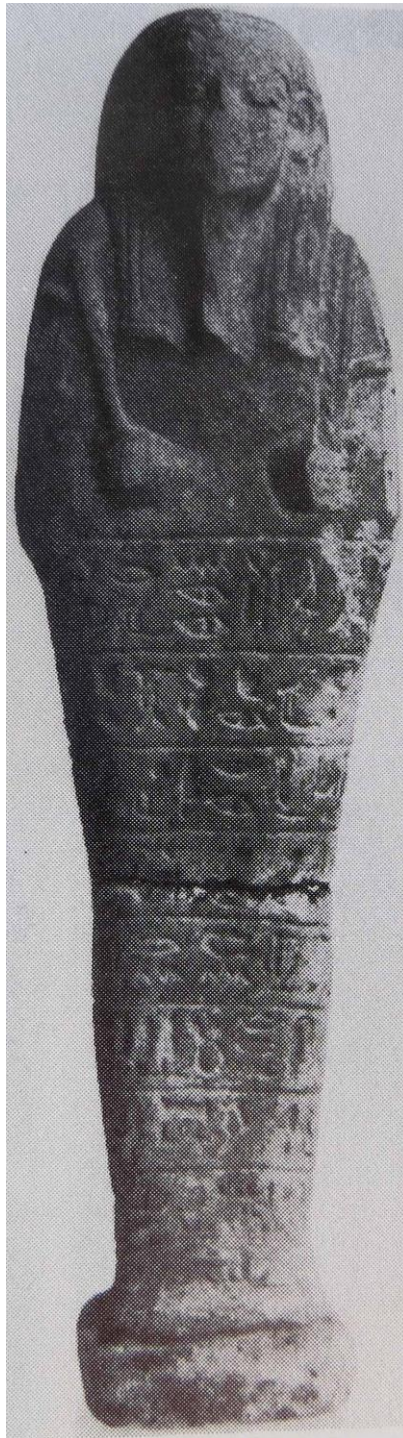
Collection: TZ

Provenance: Unknown, currently USA collection of TZ

Height: Unknown

Comments: Mould D. Numerous chips, including both the fists, tip of nose and feet pedestal.  
Faience considerably worn.

**Chappaz 43.32 unknown collection**



Published: Collection privées, *Aegyptiaca Helvetica* 10, J.L. Chappaz, nr. 107, page 87.

Collection: Unknown (Chappaz 43.32)

Provenance: Unknown.

Height: 18.0 CM

Comments: Mould D. Broken at the middle. Chipped at nose beard and hand. The quality of the photo makes it difficult to comment further.



**Chappaz 43.33 unknown collection**



Published: Collection privées, *Aegyptiaca Helvetica* 10, J.L. Chappaz, nr. 108, page 88.

Collection: Unknown (Chappaz 43.33)

Provenance: Unknown.

Height: 18.4 CM

Comments: Mould unknown. Broken at the middle. Chipped at nose beard and hand. The quality of the photo makes it difficult to comment further.

**Chappaz 43.34 unknown collection**



Published: Collection privées, *Aegyptiaca Helvetica* 10, J.L. Chappaz, nr. 109, page 89.

Collection: Unknown (Chappaz 43.34)

Provenance: Unknown.

Height: 16.8 CM

Comments: Likely Mould B. Chipped at nose. Feet missing. The quality of the photo makes it difficult to comment further.



**Chappaz 43.35 unknown collection**



Published: Collection privées, *Aegyptiaca Helvetica* 10, J.L. Chappaz, nr. 110, page 90.

Collection: Unknown (Chappaz 43.35)

Provenance: Unknown.

Height: 14.4 CM

Comments: Mould cannot be determined. Feet missing. The quality of the photo makes it difficult to comment further.

## Unknown collection A



Published: No.

Collection: Unknown, ex Slothouwer

Provenance: Formerly in the collection of Professor D. F. Slothouwer, architect and winner of the Prix de Rome in 1909. Slothouwer used his prize money to assemble an antiquities collection between the years 1909 and 1939. In 1938, the professor designed the Dutch Pavilion for the New York World Fair. Sold at Philips Auction, London, 27 November 2001, lot 1, to dealer John Ambrose of Fragments of Time (courtesy of the photo).

Height: 19.0 CM

Comments: Mould D. Some wear to the faience, turned green and brown at some parts.

**Unknown collection B**



Published: Christie's auction catalogue 2003

Collection: Unknown

Provenance: Acquired by a collector in 1988 and subsequently sold at Christie's, New York, 2003

Height: 19.1 CM

Comments: Mould D probably. A nice large example.



**Museum collection** (inventory number)

	T
Amiens, Musée de Picardie (88.3.105)	1
Brooklyn, Brooklyn Museum (37.173E)	1
Exeter, Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery (5/1946/604)	1
Parkes, Canberra, National Gallery of Art (NGA 91.1610)	1
Vatican, Vatican Museum (19349, 19372, 19381, 19383, 19385, 19406)	<u>6</u>
Museum totals	10

**Private collections**

Coll. NH	1
Coll. RSE	1
Coll. TZ	1
Coll. Unknown, Chappaz: (43.31-43.35)	4
Coll. Unknown A, ex Slothouwer	1
Coll. Unknown B, ex Christie's	<u>1</u>
Private collection totals	9

