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The search for the missing shabdis of Princess Maat-ka-ra  
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The Princess<sup>2</sup> and Divine Adoratrice, Maat-ka-ra was buried in TT320, better known as the Royal Cache. For a long time it was considered the amount of shabdis deposited in TT320 was 148<sup>3</sup>. Until today no attempt has been made to find the current location of these shabdis<sup>4</sup>, nor to verify whether the amount of 148 is correct. It has been assumed that Maat-ka-ra's shabdis were sold by the El-Rassul brothers<sup>4</sup> prior to the opening of the tomb. However, we only know for sure that some specific items were sold by them such as the funerary papyrus of Queen Henut-Tawy, High Priest Pinedjem II and Prince Djed-Ptah-iwef-ankh as well as shabdis of Pinedjem I<sup>5</sup>. Whether they also smuggled the shabdis of Maat-ka-ra can only be guessed, until now.

After extensive research I can now prove that she was buried with a larger amount of shabdis than the generally assumed number of 148.

### 1. Who was Maat-ka-ra and what was her role in Ancient Egypt?

First I will briefly discuss the important role Maat-ka-ra played in the 21<sup>st</sup> dynasty.

Maat-ka-ra was in my view the most important lady of her time. She was a Divine Adoratrice and God's wife of Amun at the time the High Priests of Thebes were at their highest powers. Furthermore, since she was a daughter of King Pinedjem I and his wife Queen Henut-tawy, she also was a Princess<sup>6</sup>.

She was the first in a new series of Divine Adoratrices that took a throne name, hers being Mut-em-hat. We may assume that her powers matched those of the ruling Pharaoh of the

<sup>1</sup> The author is webmaster of shabdicollections.com, a website for research and publications of shabdis held in private collections in the world. The author wishes to acknowledge special thanks to Glenn James, author of "Shabdis, in a private view", for his help with this project. Further thanks to Amber Druce, Bianca Hoffman, Dik van Bommel, Emily Teeter, Ingeborg Lewis, Ingeborg Waanders, Jana Souckova, Janet Johnson, Jean-Luc Boyot, Laurence Marchand, Marcel Maree, Pavel Onderka, Stephen Quirke, Sue Giles.

<sup>2</sup> See for example J.F. Aubert, *Sauvages Egyptiennes*, page 141, who mentions 148 and K. Kichen, *The Third Intermediate Period*, paragraph 48 mentions 150 shabdis.

<sup>3</sup> In L. Gosselin's "Les divines Epouses d'Amon" an attempt has been made with the help of L. Aubert and some 50 shabdis were mentioned.

<sup>4</sup> Abd el-Rassul and his two brothers were local looters. One of them, Mohammed Abd el-Rassul later became a member for the Antiquities Service (!) and helped to discover the Second Cache.

<sup>5</sup> See G.J. James, "Shabdis, in a private view", page xxxiii.

north and the High Priests at Thebes. At the time Queen Ahmose Nefertari was given the position of God's Wife, land and property were endowed to Ahmose Nefertari and passed on for this priestly position from then onwards. Needless to say this financial wealth must have given her considerable power. Not only did she take a throne name, but in her funerary items, she is also depicted with the royal uraeus, an item usually only associated with the ruling pharaoh and queen.

Furthermore, she was given the power to appoint the next ruler. In the time of Maat-ka-ra the office of God's wife of Amun itself was inherited by the daughters of the Queens of Tanis. Maat-ka-ra was a direct family member of Pinedjem II, who was the grandson of Pinedjem I, father of Maat-ka-ra. Pinedjem II arranged the burial of the family members in the Royal Cache. Maat-ka-ra's mummy, her beautiful sarcophagus, and other funerary equipment were all placed in the Royal Cache. Two shabti boxes were recorded<sup>7</sup> and 148 shabtis.

## 2. General description of her shabtis

The titles on the shabtis of Maat-ka-ra include 'Divine Adoratrice', 'God's wife of Amun' and 'Lady of the Two Lands'. Her shabtis made of faience feature the so called 'royal blue' or 'Deir el Bahri blue'. This deep blue colour frequently appears on shabtis from the Royal Cache. However, not all shabtis in the Royal Cache possess this colour, neither do all the shabtis of Maat-ka-ra feature this. Furthermore, there are also shabtis found outside the Royal Cache also possessing this deep blue colour such as the shabtis of the Priest Hor, son of High Priest Men-kheper-ra from the tomb from the High Priests of Amun from the same period as TT320, better known as the Bab El-Gusus tomb.

The workmanship on the shabtis for Maat-ka-ra is excellent for the period and obviously shows the female nature of its owner by the shape of the face and the indication of breasts. Like the shabtis of her mother, Queen Henut-tawy, the shabtis of Maat-ka-ra wear a uraeus in the wig. A distinction can be made between worker types, carrying two hoes, and overseer types carrying a whip in the left hand with the right arm stretched next to the body. The shabtis vary in size between 11.4 cm and 12.6 cm.

<sup>6</sup> Some authors still think that this Maat-ka-ra was a Queen, mainly based on an incorrect translation of one of her titles *s3t hmt-nsw-wrt* which reads Daughter of the Chief Queen and not as the queen herself. See K. Kitchen, *op.cit.* where he dismisses Maat-ka-ra as Queen partly based on the study of Wente.

## 3. Summary of the current locations of her shabtis

I have compiled an overview of all the shabtis I have discovered to date, based on the current location of the objects. A more detailed overview will be published on [www.shabticollections.com](http://www.shabticollections.com). In this overview I have provided the shabti with an unique (MKR) number, the current location of the objects, the inventory number for the museum pieces, whether a worker shabti or overseer shabti, and the possible publication information for the shabtis. For each piece further information is added such as the acquisition information and the size of the shabti.

In summary, the shabtis are currently located as follows: museums: Athens (2), Berlin (2), Boston (6), Bristol (2), Brussels (1), Cairo (105)<sup>8</sup>, Cambridge (2), Cincinnati (1), Chigaco (1), Figeac (1), Florence (2), Hildesheim (1), Ipswich (1), Jaipur (1), Leiden (1), London BM (7), London Petrie (2), Macclesfield (1), Madrid (1), Marseille (1), Moscow (2), Paris (7), Prague (1), New York MMAFA (3)<sup>9</sup>, New York Brooklyn (2), New York Peabody (1), Oxford (1), Strasbourg (1), Truro (1), Vienna (2), Warsaw (1). In private collections I distinguished 23 different shabtis that I know to be in private collections<sup>10</sup>.

The total figure of shabtis for Maat-ka-ra is therefore at least 186 pieces.

The basis of the total number of 148 shabtis found for Maat-ka-ra has been the notes of Maspero<sup>11</sup>. In these notes Maspero distinguishes the inscriptions of 148 shabtis. However, the overseer shabtis of Maat-ka-ra are *not* inscribed, apart from her name in a cartouche! Therefore, the total number of 148 shabtis could never have been correct as it is clear she must have been buried with overseer shabtis too (note for example the Cairo examples that are on display). Therefore, in order to be able to compare the shabtis I found with the original inscribed pieces I have deducted the overseers from the total number of 186 pieces I found and compared that with the inscriptions described by Maspero. From the 186 pieces

<sup>7</sup> PM I Part 2, p. 663

<sup>8</sup> I have counted and described all pieces on display in the Cairo museum. It cannot be excluded that more of her shabtis can be found in the basement of the Cairo museum.

<sup>9</sup> The MMAFA used to have 5 shabtis for Maat-ka-ra but one has been deaccessioned and the other one is now lost.

<sup>10</sup> I found many references to past auction catalogues and / or private collections. However, I have not included these as these could have ended up in museum collections at a later stage or be present in current private collections already taken into account. Since this could lead to double counting I have only included the shabtis that could be verified with pictures as unique. Consequently, it could well be that some additional shabtis are held in private collections and are not taken into account yet.

<sup>11</sup> See G. Maspero, MMAF I, 4, page 590 and further.

mentioned above, 21 are for overseers, hence still more than the 148 pieces originally recorded (165 versus 148 thus at least 17 more).

#### 4. Overview of the inscription of Maat-ka-ra's shabti

According to the information of Maspero, the shabtis were inscribed with the titles mentioned below. The titles: "the Illuminated One" (SHD) and "Osiris" (Asir) were not regarded as titles at the original registration. I have put the description of Maspero between brackets, followed by the number of the objects I found with that inscription:

- A) The God's Wife, Hmwt nTr (69): 69
- B) The God's Wife, Lady of the Two lands, Hmwt nTr nb(t) tAwy (20): 12
- C) The God's Wife of Amun, Hmwt nTr n Imn (18): 19
- D) The God's Wife of Amun, Lady of the Two lands, Hmwt nTr n Imn nb tAwy (4): 3
- E) The God's Wife and Divine Adoratrice, Hmwt nTr dwAt (10): 11
- F) The God's Wife of Amun, (?), Divine Adoratrice<sup>12</sup>, Hmwt nTr n Imn nb dwAt (16): 0
- G) The God's Wife, Adoratrice of Amun (?),<sup>13</sup> Hmwt nTr dwAt n Imn (1): 18
- H) Divine Adoratrice, dwAt nTr (4): 2
- I) Divine Adoratrice of Amun, dwAt nTr n Imn (1): 1
- J) No titles (5): 10
- K) Divine Adoratrice, Lady of the two lands (0): 2

From some of the shabtis the text was no longer readable or I lacked a photo to determine the inscription<sup>14</sup>. Also, we cannot be certain that Maspero recorded the inscriptions correctly. Therefore, it is difficult to draw any strong conclusions from the comparison of the original recorded inscriptions and the ones I found. However, at least for some inscriptions I found are of a larger number than the original recorded ones. This confirms my theory that more inscribed shabtis were originally buried in TT320 than the 148 recorded. A further study of the remaining inscriptions could strengthen this view and could provide additional clues to the total amount of shabtis buried in TT320.

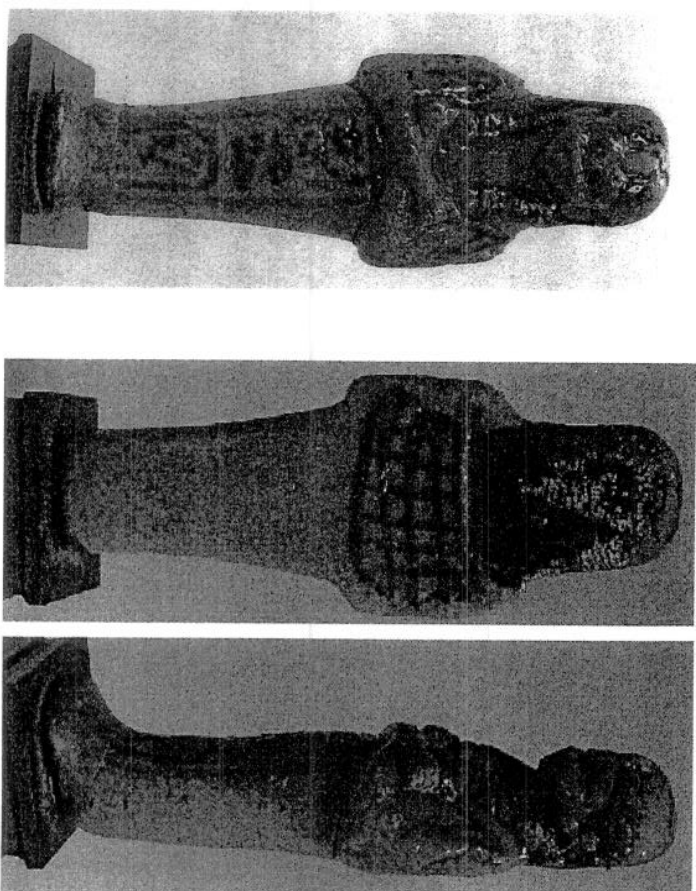
<sup>12</sup> There are no shabtis for Maat-ka-ra actually inscribed like this. This must have been a reading error by Maspero.

<sup>13</sup> The correct inscription is: Hmwt nTr (n) Imn dwAt, thus: God's Wife of Amun, the Divine Adoratrice. Apparently, Maspero misread this inscription, G), as well as F) and my guess is that these were all relating to the God's Wife of Amun, the Divine Adoratrice.

#### 5. Conclusions

Maat-ka-ra was buried in TT320 with at least 186 shabtis, of which at least 165 were inscribed. It is highly imaginable the total amount is actually above 200 pieces, based on the many references I have found to further examples that could not have been verified until now. It is also highly probable the El-Rassul brothers indeed sold shabtis of Maat-ka-ra prior to the official opening of the tomb in 1881 as it is unlikely that at least 17 pieces were not recorded by Maspero. It requires further study to get a clearer picture of the total amount of shabtis for Maat-ka-ra.

In my view, a similar research should be performed on the other objects from the Royal Cache as it is the only way to get a better understanding of the original burial.



Shabti of Maat-ka-ra, private collection in the Netherlands, photo's courtesy of [www.shabticollections.com](http://www.shabticollections.com)

<sup>14</sup> For now, I have not been able to determine the inscription of 17 pieces.

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