

The shabtis of  
**Prince Ramesses-mentuherkhepeshef**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *Introduction to this study*

This study provides an overview of all published shabtis for Ramesses-mentuherkhepeshef. In addition to the published examples I added the shabtis I have come across in the world. I will start of with a short introduction of the ancient owner and describe his shabtis in general. In the following chapters you will find the museum parallels (chapter 2) and the privately owned parallels (chapter 3).

### 1.2 *Who was Ramesses-mentuherkhepeshef?*

Prince Ramesses-mentuherkhepeshef, also known as Mentuherkhepeshef (C), was a son of Ramses IX. He was buried in the valley of the kings, in KV 19. This is very rare as this area was usually reserved for the deceased pharaohs<sup>1</sup>. KV 19 was originally intended for Ramses VIII (Prince Ramesses-setherkhepeshef), but was used for Ramesses-mentuherkhepeshef instead as he predeceased his father Ramses IX, who ruled for a lengthy 18 years till 1111 BC<sup>2</sup>. It is assumed that Ramesses-mentuherkhepeshef was a brother of Ramses X.

According to Aidon/Dodson, his titles included: "First King's Son of his Body; Eldest King's Son of his Body; General of the army and Executive at the Head of the Two Lands"<sup>3</sup>.

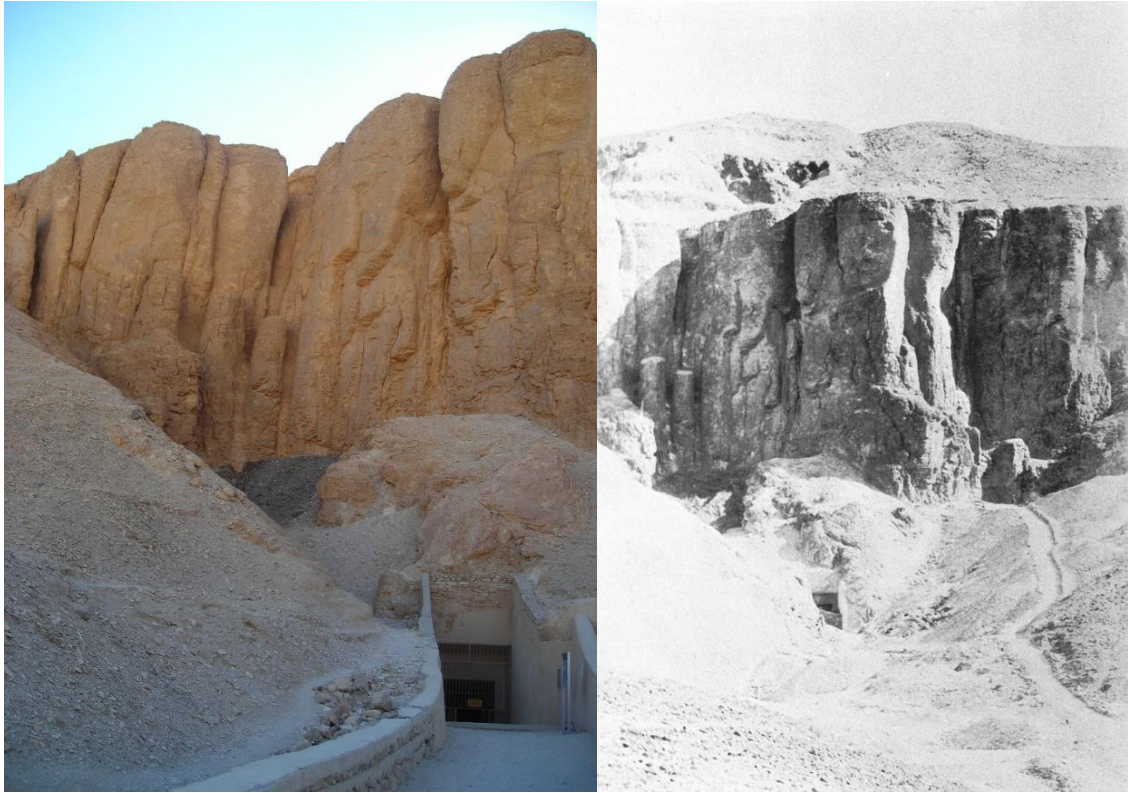
KV 19 was discovered by Belzoni in 1817. The tomb contains extraordinary reliefs and is unfinished at some other places. No funerary equipment relating to the prince was recorded at that time, but reinvestigation in late February 1906 revealed wooden and fragmentary faience shabtis, also included in this publication. There seems evidence that the Cairo and Kazan museum have intact examples in their collection from prior 1905, so perhaps Belzoni did find some shabtis originally in 1817.

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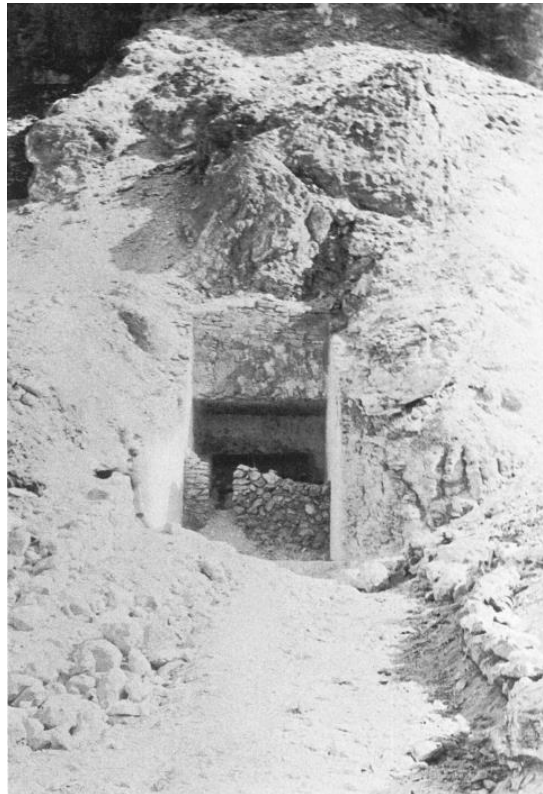
<sup>1</sup> KV 5 was the only other tomb reserved in the Valley of the Kings. The sons of Ramses II were buried there.

<sup>2</sup> The tomb of Ramses VIII is still not found.

<sup>3</sup> Dodson, Aidan; Hilton, Dyan (2004). *The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt*. London: Thames & Hudson. p.193



Current entrance to the tomb<sup>4</sup>, KV 19 and as it was in 1906<sup>5</sup>



1906

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<sup>4</sup> All “current” pictures of the tomb taken by © Nacho Ares in 2015 who has kindly provided them to me.

<sup>5</sup> Published and taken from plate 31 a and b in C.N. Reeves, “Excavations in the Valley of the Kings, 1905/6: A Photographic Record,” *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 40, 1984.



Some various scenes from KV 19. Note the title of “general of the army” in the first pictures and that the tomb is partly unfinished



Ramesses-mentuherkhepeshef

### 1.3 Description of the shabtis

#### 1.3.1 General

Currently, only worker type shabtis are known. During the New Kingdom it was not uncommon to also have shabtis in the “dress of daily living”, but we have no indication that these were made for the prince. The shabtis are all mummiform. The faience has a brilliant blue glaze and the details are in dark purple/black. Note that the faience varies per example from lighter blue to dark/royal blue.

The wig is all black with long lappets on the chest. In most cases the end of the lappet is either left blank (type B) or used to indicate a necklace (type A), in rare cases the lappets are completely filled up (type C):



Type A

Type B

Type C

The hands are holding agricultural implements in each hand. Both hands hold a hoe. They are placed relatively far to the outside of the body. The hands are painted in rather larger fists emerging from an invisible mummy shroud. On both hands a bracelet seems indicated.

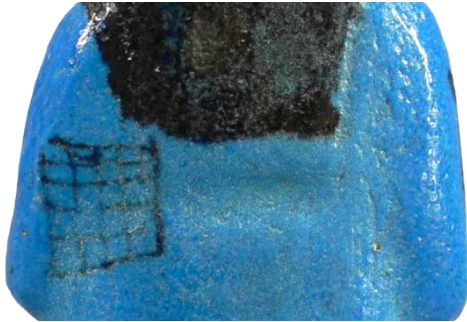


Hoes to the side of the body

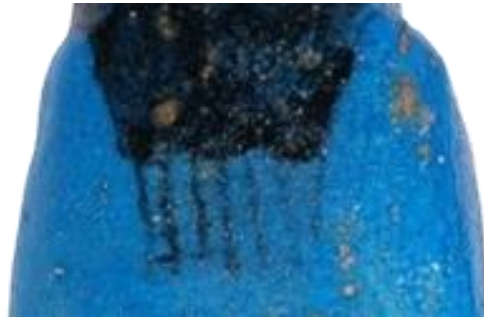


Bracelet indicated

The seed sack is hanging in the middle of the back or slung to the left side.



Type A

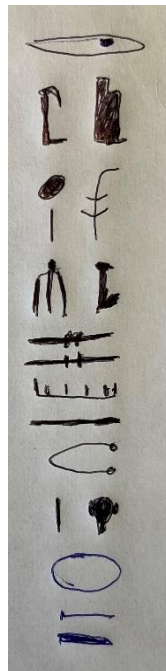


Type B

### 1.3.2. The inscription

The hieroglyphic inscriptions applied to the front of the shabti reads: “The Osiris, the King’s son, Ramesses-mentuherkhepeshef, true of voice”. Despite his many titles, his shabtis only refer to the most important one, being a son of the king.

The inscription can be visualized as follows, where the text seems to be the same on every example:



The glyphs are rather loosely applied whereby especially the ending on each example seems to be indistinct.



### 1.3.3 *Size and numbers*

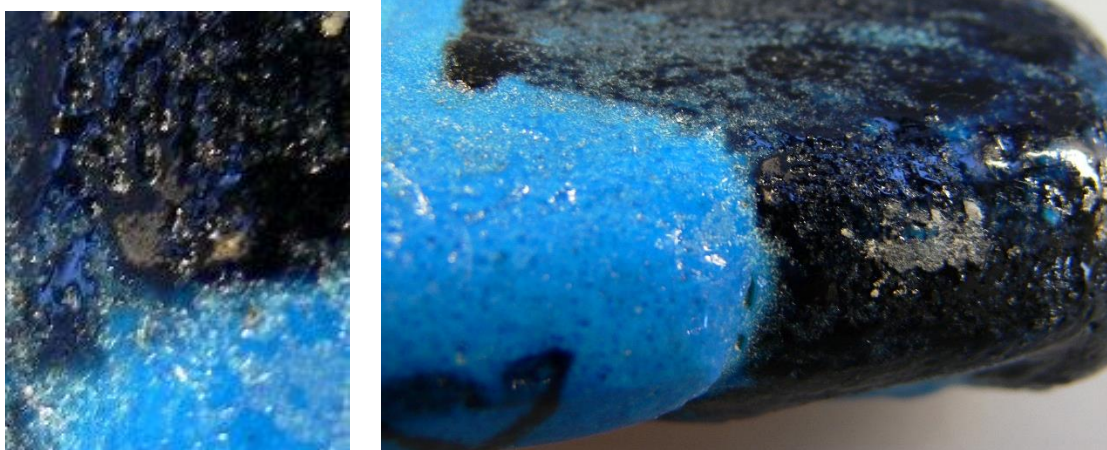
The faience shabtis are of normal size for the period measuring between 14 and 15.6 centimetres.

It is unclear how many shabtis were originally buried in the tomb for Ramesses-mentuherkhepeshef. Apart from the 9 examples herewith published, perhaps some fragmentary examples do exist. I estimate that originally some 15 to 20 shabtis were included in the tomb, based on the number of other shabtis from the New Kingdom, but is basically an educated guess.

### 1.3.4. *Special remark: gold in the wig*

Some of the examples of the shabtis for Ramesses-mentuherkhepeshef appear to have gold/pyrite in the wig. This is something also known to the author for some of the shabtis from the Royal Cache at Deir el Bahri<sup>6</sup>. Perhaps they were made at the same workshop as not so much time passed (less than 100 years) between his burial and that of the first priests and priestesses of the Third Intermediate Period.

Further research to the exact content of the goldlike deposits is required.



Goldlike deposits in the wig area

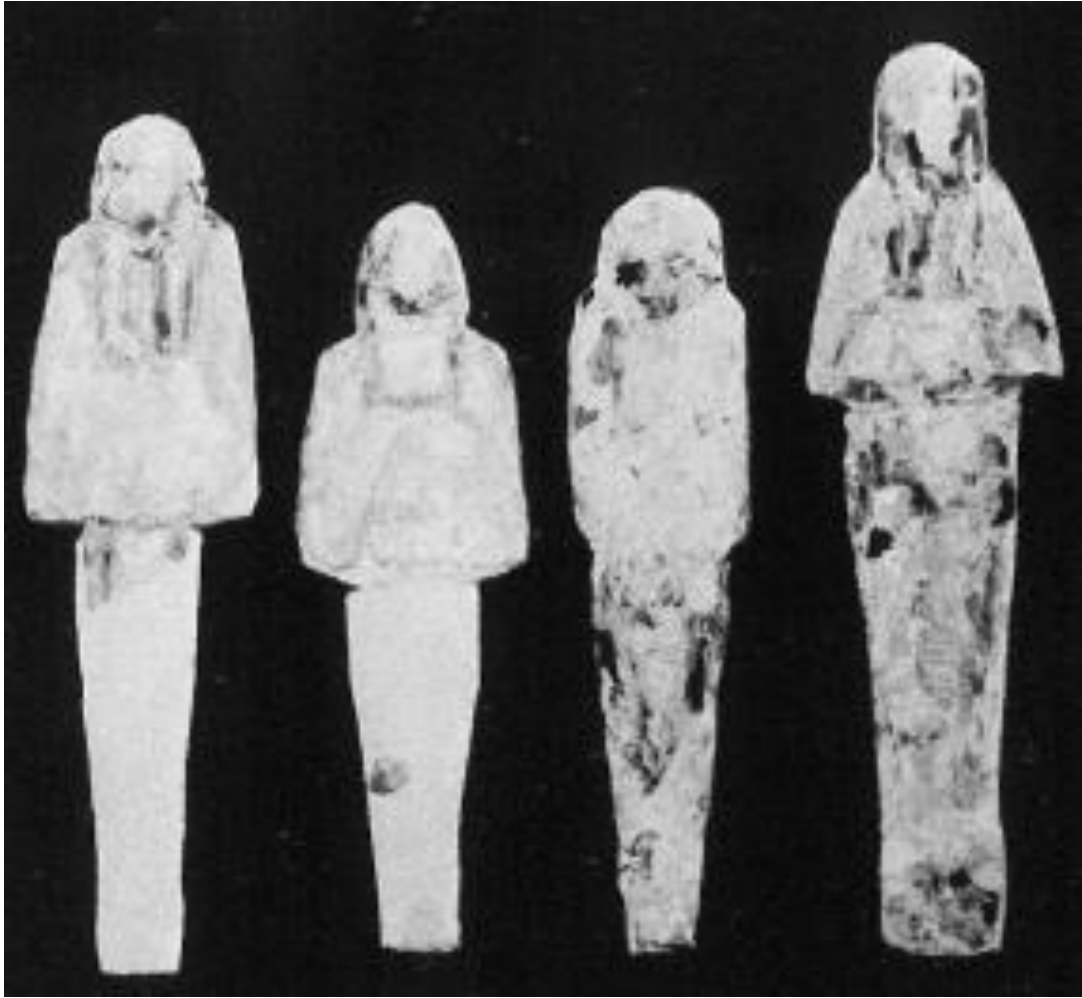
### 1.3.5 *Wooden shabtis*

During the reinvestigation and clearance of the tomb in 1905 four wooden shabtis were found<sup>7</sup>. They date to the same period based on their typology. Considering the low quality of these shabtis it seems unlikely that they were made the prince as well. For completeness I have included them here.

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<sup>6</sup> Especially those for Queen Henut-tawy (A), a daughter of Ramses XI.

<sup>7</sup> See plate 40e in C.N. Reeves, "Excavations in the Valley of the Kings, 1905/6: A Photographic Record," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 40, 1984.



Wooden shabtis found in KV 19

## 2. Museum examples

On the following pages an overview is provided of the museum pieces which are currently part of their respective collections. First I publish all the pictures of the museum pieces that I have, followed by a detailed account of the museum pieces with and without a picture.

The following information is provided for each piece:

- Location:** The city in which the museum is located is mentioned as well as the name of the museum.
- Published:** If the museum piece is published in a book or on the internet the name of the publication, author and the relevant page number is mentioned.
- Inventory nb** The inventory number is mentioned if known.
- Provenance:** For as far as available the provenance of the piece is described, detailing the previous owners prior to the entering into the collection of the museum, based on the museums information unless otherwise stated.
- Height:** The specific height of the shabti is described in centimetres.
- Comments:** Provides the comments of the author to the specific pieces, for example relating to the condition or quality of the object compared to the other parallels.

2.1 Overview of all museum examples



M.1: Cairo Museum



M.2: Kazan Museum



M.3: Cambridge Museum

## 2.2 *Details of museum examples*



M.1: Cairo Museum, Cairo, Inventory number 7707

No more details are known about the Cairo museum example. The shabti was on display at the old Cairo museum at Tahir square, in a cabinet that indicates an early registration at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Size: unknown

Comments: Appears to be intact.



M.2 National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan, Inventory number 5404/28

The Kazan example was published online some decades ago. Unfortunately it can no longer be found online. If memory serves me right, the website described that the shabti entered their collection in 1895 when the museum was founded (the entire museum collection contains 250 ancient Egyptian items).

Size: 14 cm

Comments: If the size is correctly mentioned on the website it is the smallest of the complete examples. Deep blue color and it appears to be intact.



© Glenn Janes

M.3 Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Inventory number 1948.2687

Provenance: From the Acworth collection, acquired 24/5/1991.

Size: unknown

Comments: A slender version compared to most of the others. The goldlike deposits can be seen here on the back of the wig as well. This example was identified by shabti scholar Glenn Janes on his research and description of the Cambridge collection in 2018.

### 3. Private collection examples

On the following pages an overview is provided of the examples which are currently in private collections around the world.

The following information is provided for each piece:

**Owner:** The name of the current collector/collection. In case this is known the identity of the collector is often protected by using initials only.

**Published:** If the private collection piece is published in a book or on the internet the name of the publication, author and the relevant page number is mentioned.

**Provenance:** For as far as available the provenance of the piece is described, detailing the previous owners prior to the entering into the collection of the collector.

**Height:** The specific height of the shabti is described in centimetres.

**Comments:** Provides the comments of the author to the specific pieces, for example relating to the condition or quality of the object compared to the other parallels.



3.1 Overview of all private collection examples



P.1: AB coll, Germany



P.2 NH collection, NL



P.3 Coll TZ



P.4: Unknown A



P.5: Unknown B



P.6: Unknown C





P.1: AB coll., Germany

Provenance: Private Collection, Europe, acquired in the 1970s, then Sotheby Parke-Bernet, New York, 16 May 1980, lot 397, then Sotheby's, New York, 23 June 1989, lot 402, then with Charles Ede, London, (published: "Egyptian Antiquities", 2007, no. 16), then Private Collection, U.S., sold Christie's, 16 June 2020, lot 175 to current German collector.

Size: 15.2 cm.

Comments: Some encrustations but otherwise intact and excellent. Glyphs partly faded.





P.2: NH collection, the Netherlands, NH-137

Provenance: KV19, ex Joseph Dasta, Rochester, New York, from an estate in Rochester, New York. The previous owner collected the items in the 1960's and 1970's. Sold on Ebay in 2013 to current owner.

Size: 15.6 CM

Comments: Small chip to the left feet. Otherwise excellent, from a lighter blue variant.



P.3: TZ coll., USA

Provenance: Ex coll. David Landau, Newton, MA, USA, sold by Royal Athena Gallery, February 1992, offered by Cybele in 2003, number 122, USA collector M. then to current USA collection of TZ.

Size: 15.2 or 15.6 cm

Comments: Nicely detailed painting. Some encrustations, otherwise excellent.



P.4: Unknown collection A

Provenance: Unknown. Published by Ede in 1991, *Small sculptures from Ancient Egypt*, number 46.

Size: 11.0 cm

Comments: In the 1991 catalogue of Ede it is mentioned that no parallels were known and that this could be son of Ramses II. No doubt that missing the second part of the name on the fragment contributed to this misinterpretation.



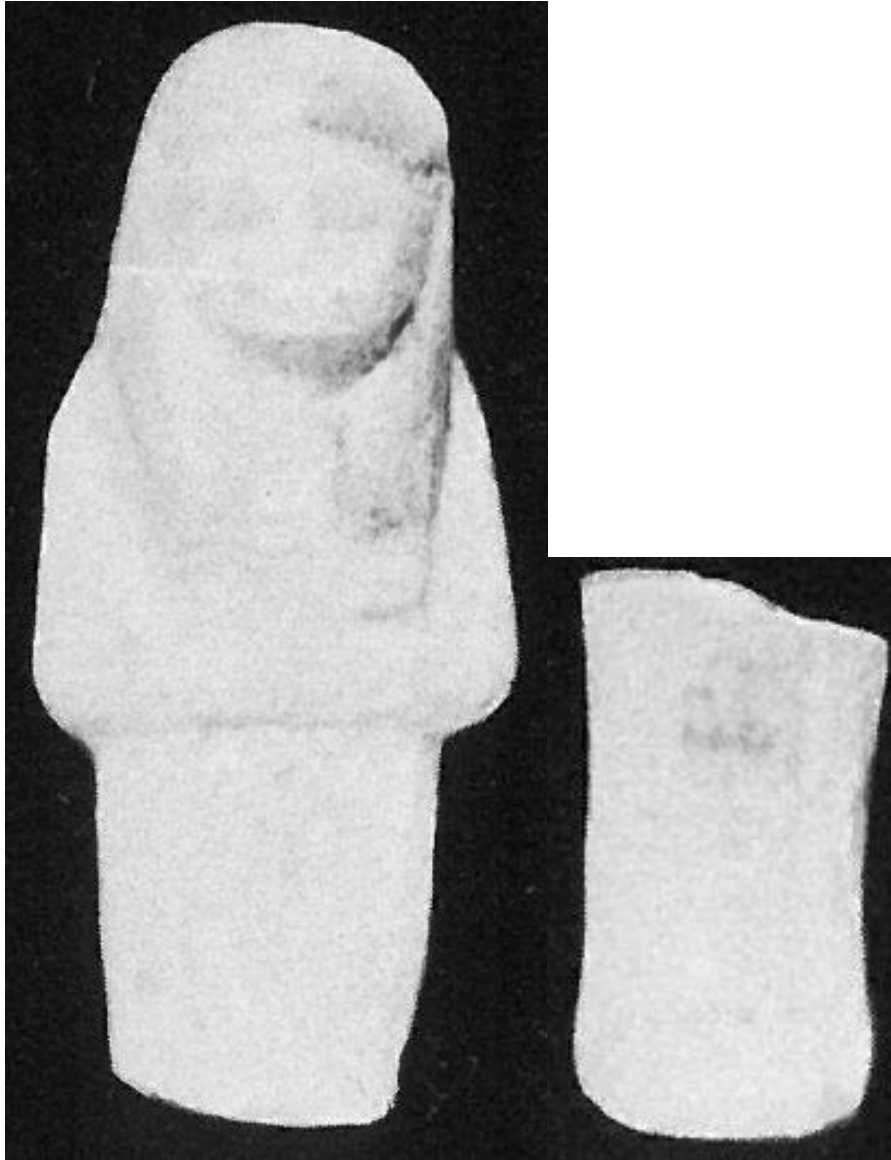
P.5: Unknown collection B, USA

Provenance: Descended through a prominent Upper East Side, NYC Estate USA, sold via Liveauctioneers, from Butterscotch Auction, New York, 24 March 2024, lot 344.

Size: 15.2 cm

Comments: Considerable encrustations and a chip to the left side of the feet. Text faded. Eyes are not aligned, indicating that the ancient artist worked from side to side.





P.6: Unknown collection C

Provenance: KV 19. Excavated by Davis in 1906. Current location is unknown, perhaps Cairo Museum. Published by C.N. Reeves, "Excavations in the Valley of the Kings, 1905/6: A Photographic Record," plate 32e, "Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo" 40, 1984.

Size: Unknown.

Comments: Thanks to the article by Reeves we have the original excavation pictures from KV 19 confirming that the faience examples of the type in this catalogue were (also?) found in the original tomb of Ramesses-mentuherkhepeshef. It is unclear whether the upper part and feet section belong to the same piece, it seems not so. Although this upper fragment looks a lot like the Ede example of P.4 I believe it is a different example, especially because of the different way the break at the bottom is different and the Davis example appears to have a scratch at the left elbow not visible at Ede's.

## Index

Below is the complete overview of all the currently known location of the shabtis of Ramesses-mentuherkhepeshef.

### Museum pieces

Between brackets is the museum inventory number.

Cairo, Cairo Museum (7707)	1
Cambridge, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (1948.2687)	1
Kazan, National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan (5404/28)	1
Museum totals	<u>3</u>

### Private collections

Coll AB	1
Coll. NH	1
Coll. TZ	1
Coll Unknown A-C	3
Private collection totals	<u>6</u>
Overall total (museums and private collections)	<u>9</u>

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