

I would like to express gratitude to The Near Eastern Archaeology Foundation for the award of a 2016 Grant-in-Aid which supported my recent travel to Vienna to present a paper at the 10th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (ICAANE). The trip also provided an opportunity for me to conduct research at the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

My research as a doctoral candidate at the University of Melbourne is investigating the intention and function of ancient Egyptian funerary figurines, more often described as *shabtis/shawabtis* or *ushebtis*. Within the framework of examination of the nature of depictions on the containers used to house the figurines, the ICAANE presentation addressed the notion of the figurines being actors in the offering rite. Examination of the decorative elements evidenced on a corpus of containers designed to protect funerary figurines reveals a disconnection between the meanings attributed to these elements and the current understanding of the intention and function of the figurine. Examining the nature of the representations on these containers contributes to a contextual understanding of what they were protecting. A wide range of decorative elements represented on funerary figurine containers support a relationship between the figurines and the offering rite. The paper explored the potential of the funerary figurine being an actor in that rite, and it will be published in the proceedings of the conference.

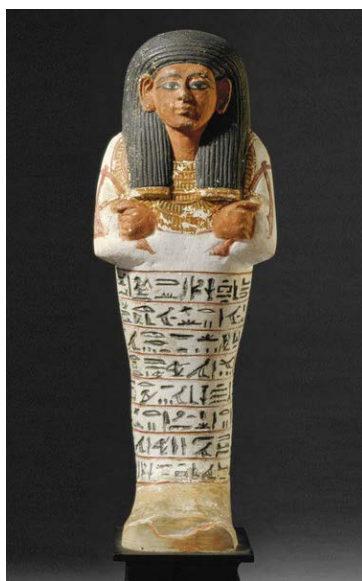
The presentation was attended by Dr. Vera Müller, the head of the Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Dr. Müller provided very positive feedback in support of my contentions at the conference, and has since corresponded with me confirming she considers my 'interpretation as a real advance in the interpretation of these objects'. As I am approaching the completion of my doctoral research the opportunity to garner this support was invaluable.

Although ancient Egyptian scholars represented the minority of attendees at the conference I was very fortunate to meet Dr. David Aston, a faculty member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Egypt and Levant, and author of the most extensive typological analysis of 'shabti' boxes which was referenced in my paper. Prof. Manfred Bietak was the joint organiser of a workshop examining palaces in the near east and Egypt, and one of the highlights of the conference was my attendance at this workshop during the section when four speakers, including Prof. Bietak, presented papers considering Egyptian palaces.

Dr. Regina Hölzl, the Director of the Egyptian and Near Eastern Collection at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, and a member of the 10th ICAANE organising committee was very kind in facilitating my visit to the museum to examine and photograph a selection of New Kingdom funerary figurines held in their collection. The ancient Egyptian galleries in the museum include a room devoted to funerary figurines and their associated containers and implements. The highlight of this collection is a beautiful figurine of Sennedjem, whose tomb complex is located at Deir el-Medina (TT 1). The wall decorations on this tomb include a depiction of Spell 110 from the Book of the Dead, considered in my thesis within the context of the portrayal of workers in the Field of Reeds. I was most grateful for the

generosity of Dr. Hölzl in removing this figurine from exhibition in order I could photograph it.

During my visit to the museum I was also able to examine a number of figurine boxes inside their display cases. Included in this selection was the funerary figurine box of the prophet Montu Neseramun, dated to the Third Intermediate Period (TIP) and mentioned in my ICAANE presentation as an example of a box depicting decorative elements which allude to its contents. During the TIP Book of the Dead Spell 6, often described as the shabti spell, frequently appears on the figurine boxes. On this example the inscription is seen on three sides of the box, and the long side portrays a representation of the deceased making an offering of a funerary figurine to a mummiform seated god holding an ankh.



**Funerary figurine of Sennedjem
New Kingdom**

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Accession number 6614



**Box of the prophet of Montu Neseramun
Third Intermediate Period**

© Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna
Accession number 961

Attendance at the 10th ICAANE afforded me the opportunity to present my research to a range of international scholars and to simultaneously conduct research at the Kunsthistorisches Museum. All feedback received was extremely positive and encouraging and therefore very important as I move toward the completion of my thesis.

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