

The British
Museum



Journey Towards Eternity

9 August

Object in Focus
Room 3

Supported by

The Altajir Trust



The Charles Wallace
Burma Trust



Journey Towards Eternity

Taharqa, the King of Kush and a Nubian pharaoh of the 25th dynasty of Egypt, died in 664 BC. Various grave goods were put into his tomb to accompany him on his journey to the afterlife. This included numerous shabtis, small-sized funerary figurines, intended to act as servants for the deceased.

Even the pharaoh had to face trial by the gods. The Egyptians believed that if the gods judged him free of sins he could join his ancestors in the eternal paradise of the Field of Reeds where he would lead a life very similar to the earthly one. The dead had to work in the Afterlife. According to the spell written on the object, when the dead king was given work to do, the shabti would say '... here I am ...' and do the work for him.

Normal shabtis therefore usually carry work tools like a hoe, flail and bag. As this is a royal shabti these tools are exchanged for the flagellum and sceptre, symbols of royal power.



[55489]
SHABTI OF
KING TAHARQA (TIRHAKAH)
Serpentine [XXVth Dynasty; 663 B.C.]
FROM HIS PYRAMID-TOMB AT NURI IN THE

Serpentine Shabti of King Taharqa
Napatan, circa 664 B.C.
© The Trustees of the British Museum



[55489]
SHABTI OF
KING TAHARQA (TIRHAKAH)
Serpentine. [xxvth Dynasty; 663 B.C.]
FROM HIS PYRAMID-TOMB AT NURI IN THE
SUDAN. EXCAVATION OF THE BOSTON-HARVARD
EXPEDITION, 1916-17. Given by the Sudan
Government, 1922.