

## ***Magic Bricks of Henutmehyt*** **The British Museum**

From the tomb of Henutmehyt at Thebes, Egypt  
19th Dynasty, around 1290 BC



During the New Kingdom (about 1550-1070 BC), magic bricks were placed in tombs, in order to protect the deceased from the enemies of the god Osiris. They were positioned at the four cardinal points of the tomb (north, east, south and west). An amulet was set in each socket, standing so it faced the opposite wall. Each brick was inscribed with a portion of Spell 151 of the *Book of the Dead*. This spell identifies the deceased with Osiris, Isis and Nephthys. The four sons of Horus offer their protection; the amuletic figures of the magic bricks specifying the ways in which they will defend the deceased from attack.

The brick beside the **west** wall contains a faience *djed* pillar, representing the backbone of Osiris. It was thus an amulet which promoted stability and endurance.

The brick by the **east** wall is surmounted by a clay figure of the jackal god Anubis. He presided over the mummification process, and protected the necropolis (cemetery).

The mummiform figure by the **north** wall is identified in the spell as a *shabti*. This amulet offers to perform agricultural tasks on behalf of the deceased.

The brick by the **south** wall contains a reed to hold a torch, burning the path of those who wish the deceased harm.

J.H. Taylor, *Studies in Egyptian antiquities*, British Museum Occasional Paper 123 (, 1999)