

Shabti of Qeniherkhepeshef **The British Museum**

From Deir el-Medina, Thebes, Egypt
19th Dynasty, around 1210 BC

'Scribe in the Place of Truth'



Shabti figures of the New Kingdom (about 1550-1070 BC) were often made of stone, with paint used to give the servant figures a lifelike appearance. This is a particularly fine example. The heavy wig, with gold bands at the ends, rests over an elaborate and colourful collar. The red-brown colour of the face indicates that the figure is male. Ancient Egyptian women were usually depicted with paler skin, implying that they did not have to go out and work in the harsh sunlight.

The white on the *shabti's* arms and lower body show that the figure is mummified, identifying it with the god Osiris, who is also shown with his arms crossed over his chest. While the god holds the crook and flail symbolizing kingship, the *shabti* holds two hoes, denoting agricultural labour. *Shabti* figures were intended to work on behalf of the deceased in the Afterlife, activated by a spell. Here the *shabti* spell is skilfully painted in horizontal lines of black around the figure. The hieroglyphic text begins with Qeniherkhepeshef's name and title, 'Scribe in the Place of Truth' (the royal necropolis (cemetery)).

It seems that in life Qeniherkhepeshef enjoyed having others do his work for him, and making life easier for himself. He is recorded as having workmen working for him while they were supposed to be at the royal tombs, and was accused of taking bribes.

The British Museum has another object related to Qeniherkhepeshef: a headrest carved with a figure of Bes.

Source URL: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/s/shabti_of_qeniherkhepeshef.aspx
Saylor URL: <http://www.saylor.org/courses/arth201>

R. Parkinson, *Cracking codes: the Rosetta St* (London, The British Museum Press, 1999)

M.L. Bierbrier, *The tomb-builders of the Phara* (London, The British Museum Press, 1982)

Source URL: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/s/shabti_of_qeniherkhepeshef.aspx
Saylor URL: <http://www.saylor.org/courses/arth201>