

## **Granite Shabti of King Taharqa The British Museum**

From the pyramid of Taharqa at Nuri, Nubia  
25th Dynasty, 664 BC



Egypt was brought partially under Kushite domination by Piye (reigned about 747-716 BC). On his commemorative stela he claims that he was acting with the blessing of the god Amun to restore order to the country. At the time, Egypt was politically divided into small areas, governed by local dynasts who often styled themselves as kings.

It was the ambition of Piye and his successors to restore Egypt to greatness. Unfortunately, their intervention in political affairs in Palestine brought Egypt to the attention of the Assyrian empire. King Taharqa (690-664 BC) eventually lost Egypt to the Assyrians. The country was regained only briefly by his successor Tanutamun (664-656 BC).

The early Kushite kings were buried on beds placed on stone platforms within their pyramids. These structures were based on the pyramids of Egyptian private tombs of the New Kingdom (about 1550-1070 BC), but the burials were entirely Kushite. Taharqa introduced more Egyptian elements to the burial, such as mummification, coffins and sarcophagi of Egyptian origin, as well as the provision of *shabti* figures. These figures were in the style of the Middle and New Kingdoms, the era that the Kushites considered as the height of Egyptian culture. The use of stone, an obsolete early *shabti*-formula and the rugged features of these large *shabti* are characteristic of early examples.

J.H. Taylor, *Egypt and Nubia* (London, The British Museum Press, 1991)