

Sphinx of Taharqo
The British Museum

From Temple T at Kawa, Sudan, Kushite, about 680 BC



Sphinxes represent the immense power of the Egyptian king. The human head of this sphinx is adorned with two uraei, the symbols of kingship. The mane around the neck is characteristically carved with care.

The face is that of Taharqo, whose name appears on the cartouche on the chest. Taharqo was one of the rulers of Kush who dominated Egypt as the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (about 747-656 BC).

Although the basic form of this sphinx is Egyptian, several features set it apart. Most striking are the facial features of the king which leave no doubt that he is an African. The Kushite kings were proud of their ancestry and chose to be buried in Kush near their religious centre at Jebel Barkal.

This statue was found in Temple T at Kawa, in Upper Nubia (Sudan). Kawa was the home of a local form of the great Egyptian state god Amun. The kings of the Kush built temples there, with the intention of ensuring Amun's prominence. Temple T was constructed by Taharqo between 684 and 680 BC.