

Textile with Names of King Piye
The British Museum

From Thebes, Egypt
25th Dynasty, around 712 BC

Piece of linen cloth with a vertical inscription close to the fringed edge



Vast quantities of linen were used in the daily rituals of temples. Some of this linen was donated, often inscribed with the name of the donor. This piece of high quality linen was donated by the Kushite king Piye to a temple of Amun-Re, possibly at Karnak. A column of inscription, close to the fringed edge of the cloth, gives the king's titles and a year date, presumably the year of king Piye's reign.

The year date is fragmentary. Two symbols for the number '10' survive, indicating that the date must be higher than Year 20. The most likely reading of the group is 'Year 30', but 'Year 40' has also been proposed. In either case, this is the highest known year of reign for this king.

The relatively good condition of the cloth suggests that it found its way into a tomb. Food offerings in temples were returned to the priests once the gods had magically taken what they wanted. The same was the case for other items used in everyday cult activities. When linen cloths became too old to use, they could be given to priests for their burials, although some might have been given directly to favoured officials by the king.

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

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J. B. Greene, *Fouilles exécutées à Thèbes da* (Paris, Firmin Didot frères, 1855)

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