



Shabti

Date

1388-1350 BC

Primary Maker

Giovanni Battista Belzoni

Medium

Basalt

Description

Lower part of a shabti figure of fine black basalt and highly polished. Scratched into the surface on the front of the figure are hieroglyphs in 4 vertical lines, including a cartouche. The cartouche reads 'Nebmaatre' the

prenomen of Amenhotep III. Found by Giovanni Belzoni. A shabti was a kind of servant figure that was buried with the deceased and found in elite burials from the New Kingdom. In the afterlife the deceased was expected to help maintain the 'reed fields' where they would be living in the afterlife. If the deceased was called on to do manual labour the shabtis would take his place. To this end they were often depicted holding tools in their hands. Shabtis were commonly made of stone, wood, plaster, and faience. The number of shabtis included in a burial changed over the course of Egyptian history; in the 18th dynasty, only one shabti was common, but by the Third Intermediate Period they could have one for every day of the year! Some were inscribed only with the name and title of their master while others contained an inscription known as the 'shabti spell' or chapter 6 of the Book of Coming Forth by Day, better known as the Book of the Dead. This spell would make them answer when their master was called on to work. The word shabti means 'answerer'.

Dimensions

Object/Work: 57 x 47 x 37 mm