



Unknown (Egyptian)
Shawabti of High Priest Paynozem
ca. 1000 BCE
faience
Gift of Horace Mayer
61.19.4

being mass-produced in molds, resulting in less detail and precision. These shawabtis represented workers who would do agricultural work in the afterlife in place of the deceased. Also called *shabtis* or *ushabtis*, depending on the period, shawabtis were made of stone, faience (a sandy mixture of crushed quartz, natron, and pigment that was heated to fuse it together), wood, or molded mud.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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A shawabti is a small mummiform statue found in all Egyptian tombs, from peasants to pharaohs. Shawabtis, which acted as a substitute for the body of the deceased, were inscribed with the name of the deceased and with part or all of a spell from the *Book of the Dead*, which reads: "O shabti, if the deceased is commanded to do any work in the realm of the dead: to prepare the fields, to irrigate the land or to convey sand from east to west; 'Here I am' you shall say."

Shawabtis were first placed in tombs during the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2030 BCE–1640 B.C.E.). The earliest shawabtis were usually carefully crafted out of stone, each with its own coffin. During later periods, the number of shawabti figures increased, with many

RELATED IMAGES



Shawabti of Ahmes
26th Dynasty (664–525 BCE)
faience; 5 1/2 in. (14 cm). Gift of
Horace Mayer (60.37.10)



*Shawabti with the cartouche of
Psammetichus*
ca. 660 BCE
faience; 7 3/16 x 2 x 1 1/4 in. (18.2 x
5.1 x 3.2 cm). Gift of Mr. Horace Mayer
(62.32.6)

Sources

"Back in Time: Striking Poses." Ancient Egypt at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.
http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/egypt_reborn/ancient-egypt/k3/html_k03_back.php

Ikram, Salima. *Death and Burial in Ancient Egypt*. Great Britain: Longman, 2003.

"Mud Shabti Figures." British Museum Catalogue Entry for Object Number EA 8544
http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/m/mud_shabti_figures.aspx



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DISCUSS

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Shawabti (shuh-WAB-tee) figures were placed in tombs to do chores in the afterlife. Originally shawabtis were carefully crafted out of stone, each with its own coffin. As time went on, however, tombs tended to have more shawabtis, often of lesser quality, with many of them being mass-produced in molds.

Do you think this shawabti was carefully hand-formed or created in a mold? Why?

Why do you think this trend toward mass-production might have occurred?

Can you think of any consumer products today that have followed a similar trend?



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CREATE

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Pharaohs often commissioned and designed their tombs, complete with shawabti (shuh-WAB-tee) figures to do work for them in the afterlife, as well as many tools, containers, and provisions.

Try your hand at designing a tomb. Make a sketch of your plans or use an empty shoebox to create a diorama.

Don't forget to include:

- a mummy with a sarcophagus (coffin)
- canopic jars to hold the mummy's organs
- grave pots with offerings of food for the gods
- shawabti figures to do the chores
- other items from (it was believed that items from daily life would be needed in the afterlife)