

HUMANITIES WRITING COMPETITION ITEM INFORMATION 2024–25

1. LR 1109

Object name: **Tudigong figurine**

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=1131



Material: wood, textiles

Height: approx. 38 cm

Place: south-east China or Taiwan?

Date: late nineteenth or early twentieth century

Acquisition source: Professor David McMullen, 2020; acquired from Cheffins auction house, Cambridge

A Tudigong, 'lord of the land', is honoured in Chinese religion as the guardian divinity of a village or small urban neighbourhood, able to protect and bring wealth to his community. He is typically shown as a venerable old man and may, as here, hold a piece of gold in one hand. This figure shows signs of having been venerated in a shrine with incense.

2. LR 550

Object name: **Bes amulet**

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=550





Material: jasper stone

Height: 2.2 cm

Place: Egypt

Date: BCE 1550-1295, Dynasty XVIII

Acquisition source: Gwendolen Crewdson, 1918/19?

Bes was an ancient Egyptian deity worshipped as a protector of households and especially of mothers. He was depicted at first as a cat and later as a stocky male human figure wearing a leopard skin; this example has the face of a lion. Images of Bes were kept in homes and could be depicted on a variety of objects, such as this amulet which may have been worn for protection.

3. LR 674

Object name: **Cinerary Urn**

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=675





Material: pottery

Height: 22.9 cm. Diameter at widest point: 24.9 cm

Place: Girton, England

Date: AD 400–600

Acquisition source: excavation at Girton College, 1881

This hand-made pot, decorated with bosses, stamps and incised marks, which once held cremated human remains, was one of a number of similar artefacts to be excavated at the late Roman/early medieval cemetery site discovered at Girton College in the 1880s during construction of the college buildings.

4. LR 788

Object name: **Tanagra figurine: woman with fan**

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=790





8 WOMAN WITH FAN
Boeotian, 3rd cent. BC, LR.788

Material: terracotta

Height: 20.7 cm

Place: Boeotia, Greece

Date: BCE 300–200

Acquisition source: Hon. Evelyn Saumarez, 1902; purchased in Athens 1873

'Tanagra' figures, dating from the third century BCE, are named after the town in Greece where they were first found in large quantities, most often in tombs. They are small terracotta human figures made in hollow moulds, brightly painted in watercolour after firing. Although they follow an older tradition of terracotta figures used as cult images or votive objects, they may have been used simply as ornaments. The tanagras in the background of the second photograph give an impression of the generic style of these figures.

5. LR 148

Object name: **Cat amulet**

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=148





Material: blue-green faience

Height: 3 cm Length: 1.7 cm

Place: Egypt

Date: BCE 525–404, dynasty XXVII

Acquisition source: Gwendolen Crewdson, 1918/19

This amulet of a cat most likely represents the goddess Bastet, the protector of women, pregnancy and the home. Amulets were very commonly used in ancient Egypt, in varied forms representing deities, symbols or miniature objects, worn to protect the wearer or placed in tombs. Faience cast in moulds was the most popular material used.

Some ideas:

Divine protection

Individuality and anonymity

Gender roles

Contrasting artistic styles and levels of technology

The tension between museum displays and religious/cultural beliefs

Anything else an object suggests to you!

Some starting points for research:

Tudigong:

<https://glossary.mg-lj.si/referential-fields/tudigong/tudigong>

<https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2023/05/13/2003799703>

Alessandro Dell'Orto, *Place and Spirit in Taiwan: Tudi Gong in the Stories, Strategies and Memories of Everyday Life*. (Routledge: London, 2002)

Egyptian amulets:

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/egam/hd_egam.htm

Anglo-Saxon burials:

Sam Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death* (Sutton Publishing Ltd.: Stroud, 2000)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burial_in_Anglo-Saxon_England

Tanagras:

<https://carlos.emory.edu/publications/RecastingAntiquity/contents/>

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a87a228d01c8459295bd2eb4d5513f04>