

Tomb Stela of Intef



Stela, Egypt, c2101-2070BCE, Limestone, 102x72cm, British Museum

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This carving into limestone shows a man (portrayed as larger than the other figures) accepting an offering with his right hand, while holding a long, thin object (snake or cord?) with his left hand. He is followed by three female figures whose are shown approximately 2/3rds of the height of the main character. The person making the offering is portrayed as much smaller, about 1/3rd the height of the main figure. The sizes may be relative to the importance of the different figures.

The three female figures are shown with slightly different facial expressions but the headdress and clothing of each is very similar. The first and third women have both hands clenched but with thumbs extended. The second woman has her right hand clenched but the left is open handed. Could this be a comment on the personality or nature of the different women?

The eyes of the main character are shown as elongated. The small person making the offering has no eyes – perhaps a further reference to his lesser importance.

The figures are surrounded by hieroglyphic text.

The overall impression of the carvings is of the importance of the main figure, and to a lesser degree, the three following figures.

A stela is described by Lucie-Smith (2003 p204)¹ as “An upright slab, usually used as a grave marker”.

The British Museum website² describes this Stela “son of Ka: Intef is shown standing, receiving an offering from a small male figure who stands in front of him; the positioning of this figure and the scale are very characteristic of the First Intermediate Period. Behind Intef are three female figures, all referred to as his wives, named Mery, Iutu, and Iru.”

It describes the hieroglyphics surrounding the scene as “a mixture of offering formulas, important historical information, and phrases that form parts of standard idealized biographical texts”.

Part 1: Images of works before 1000BCE

¹ LUCIE-SMITH, E. (2004). *The Thames & Hudson dictionary of art terms*. New York, N.Y., Thames & Hudson.
²

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=119635&partId=1&people=100610&peoA=100610-1-5&sortBy=imageName&page=1