

Stela of Inheretnakht



Probably from Naga ed-Deir, Egypt
First Intermediate Period (2160–2040 BC)

Limestone stela of the official Inheretnakht and his wife Hu

The artistic output of the Old Kingdom (about 2613-2160 BC) was remarkably consistent. The First Intermediate Period, however, saw the development of very localized styles and manners of representation. The growing power of local officials meant that more people wanted to erect monuments to themselves and the disappearance of central control contributed to the lack of formally trained craftsmen to execute these monuments. With these so-called 'provincial' styles it is possible to suggest the origin and date of many pieces, purely based on style.

A large number of stelae were excavated at Naga ed-Deir in the early twentieth century. Although its find spot is unknown, the stela of Inheretnakht can be confidently attributed to this site by its similarity to the excavated pieces: the use of a coloured border, similarity in the forms of the hieroglyphs, and the arrangement of the small figures before the deceased. While the stela shows some signs of provincial art style, it is a far more accomplished piece than many others found at the site, some of which might be rejected as fakes if their excavated origin was not so certain.

G. Robins, *The art of ancient Egypt* (London, The British Museum Press, 1997)