

Wooden Stela of Tjenetdiashakhet The British Museum

From Thebes, Egypt
25th Dynasty, around 900 BC

Before a table of bread



Stelae, usually carved from stone, were a part of tomb design going back to the beginning of Egyptian history. However, the practice of placing a wooden stela in a tomb was a new feature of this period. These wooden stelae are usually brightly coloured, and some are very large.

This example, unusually, is painted on both sides. One side shows Tjenetdiashakhet seated before a table of food, with some sealed jars below, and a prayer for offerings above. The other side shows her standing before Re-Horakhty. During the New Kingdom (about 1550-1070 BC), the tombs of the élite in Thebes consisted of offering chapels with painted or carved scenes, with the owner buried in a shaft in the rock below. In the succeeding Third Intermediate Period (about 1070-661 BC), the construction of such decorated tombs stopped, and decoration was instead concentrated on the items buried with the deceased. A number of factors might have influenced this: dwindling financial resources, a desire for more security, or a change in belief.

M.L. Bierbrier (ed.), *Hieroglyphic texts from Egypt-5*, Part 11 (London, The British Museum Press, 1987)

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