

Living forever

Like most gravestones, this **stele** [\[Egypt 2\]](#) tells us through words and images about the person whose burial it marked. The text is inscribed in **hieroglyphics** (the symbols with which ancient Egyptians wrote) in five vertical columns in the middle of the stele. Each Egyptian hoped to receive the gifts and food supplies shown on his or her stele. The stele was dedicated to one or more gods who would also help the dead in the afterlife. Only the top half of this stele remains but from it we can read the name of its owner, Serep, and the god to whom he dedicated it, Re- Horakty. Egyptians believed that if their names were written down with pictures of themselves and food supplies they would live forever.



This text reads:

“Offerings which the king shall give to Re-Horakty, the great god, lord of the sky, so he might give offerings of bread, beer, incense, cattle, fowl and everything good and pure for the Ka of The Osiris Serep True of Voice and his beloved son, Irt-Heru True of Voice, the revered ones before the great god, lord of the sky.

The title *The Osiris* names the person who has died. The inscription tells us that at the time of Serep's death, his son Irt-Heru was still alive, as his name does not have this title. The **Ka** was a double of the dead person, without a body, that was thought to live in or around the burial. Re-Horakty translates as Sun-Horus of the Two Horizons. Re means Sun so Re-Horakty wore the disk of the sun as part of his crown, as shown in the bottom left of the stele. The winged (traveling) sun is also shown at the top of the stele, just below the arch, which represents the sky. Horus is a god of the sky. The arch of the sky is held up by the two horizons, East and the West, where the sun is born and dies each day. Re-Horakhte is also a god of the dead because the dead hope to go with him when he dies at sunset each day, to be reborn at dawn in the next.

Stelae were made in all periods of ancient Egyptian history. The drawing style of this stele helps Egyptologists, who study Egyptian artefacts, to date it to the 25th Dynasty (760–656 BC). Some such stelae, made of wood, were painted with bright colours, but most were made of unpainted limestone. This example is made of limestone, but the artist used a layer of plaster on top of the limestone to make a smooth surface on which to paint. This limestone layer is visible where the top of the stele is chipped. There are also patches of red and yellow paint in the hieroglyphics, the hands and faces of the men, and the sun disk.

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