

Chancellor Horiraa's offering table

26th dynasty, between 610 and 570 BC

Black stone

H.: 12 cm; W.: 82 cm; D. 41 cm

Department of Egyptian Antiquities, Musée du Louvre (D 65)

Offering tables placed on the floor in front of the false door of a tomb, or before a statue, or near the outside entrance, were used for ritual offerings to the deceased—real or magical. The mat beneath the central panel is the hetep hieroglyph that means “to be satisfied.” It is flanked symmetrically by libation ewers (hes), round loaves of bread, a fowl, a haunch of beef, and water basins. The offering formula begins underneath the hetep and ends near the water spout that allowed the water to run onto the floor of the tomb; the inscription places Horiraa under the protection of Osiris and Sikar, god of the great necropolis at Memphis (now Saqqara) where the tomb was dug, as well as of Ptah and “the Ennead [nine gods] of the White Wall.” The “white wall” was a very old name for Memphis which at that time covered the entire region, including Heliopolis, the city of the Ennead. Horiraa was a chief of court and the king's chancellor for Lower Egypt, which indicates his lofty rank in the Memphis court during the Saite dynasty when art was imbued with a deliberately archaic classicism. Thus the offering table adopts Middle Kingdom iconography developed thirteen centuries earlier. In an additional refinement, the rations of the various dishes are engraved along the edge, like the panels on the Old Kingdom mastabas, many models of which can be found in the Saqqara necropolis.



© 2003 Musée du Louvre/ Georges Poncet