

EGYPTIAN FAIENCE FIGURINE OF AN ANTELOPE WITH TIED FEET

Egyptian, 18th Dynasty

Faïence

L: 3.7 cm (1.5 in)

Reference: 17522



This beautiful two-dimensional figurine represents an antelope with tied legs. Its back is slightly rounded and without anatomical details. Slightly modeled shapes mark the abdomen and the muscles of the legs and neck, and glazed black lines demarcate and enrich the rendering of the horns, muzzle, ears, and tail, and highlight the presence of the laces around the hooves. The figurine, despite its miniature size, conveys a remarkable sense of realism and vitality.

The original purpose of this piece is still difficult to determine. It could have been an ornament decorating a precious object (such as a piece of finely crafted wood furniture), a funerary offering prepared for the sacrifice (in this case, the statuette would have played a role recalling that of the animals painted on tomb walls), or even, because of the reduced size, a figurine intended to be deposited in the foundations of a temple or of a royal funerary monument. Such deposits, composed of life-sized or miniaturized symbolic offerings (any kind of food offerings, amulets, and also daily objects such as work tools, etc.), were placed in shafts that were specifically made in particular areas of the new buildings (under the doors, at four corners, etc.) and directly depended on the pharaoh who was dedicating the building; a prophylactic meaning is currently attributed to these deposits. Their existence is attested from the Old Kingdom onward.

Gazelles, wild animals that live in the desert, were regularly hunted in ancient Egypt. In the New Kingdom (Dynasty 18), herds of wild animals, among which were antelopes, also lived in domesticated status at the royal court. In the mythological framework, gazelles were associated with Seth because of the natural environment in which they lived: like the rest of the game in the desert, they came to symbolize hostile forces. But at the same time, in religious beliefs, their ability to survive in such a harsh environment endowed them with a regenerative power, enabling them to conquer death itself. This probably explains the existence of the large number of amulets, often molded in faïence, that

represent this bovid.

CONDITION

The piece, which was probably molded, is complete and virtually intact: only the horns have been reglued.

PROVENANCE

Acquired on London Art Market, in 2004.

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