

## EGYPTIAN FAIENCE SUPPORT IN THE SHAPE OF A COLUMN CAPITAL

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Egyptian, Late Period or Ptolemaic period (ca. 7th-1st century B.C.)

Faience

H: 7.2 cm

Reference: 22794



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This support probably molded on a core that burned during the firing process is hollow and shows an elliptical opening in the lower part, while seven circular holes are visible at the other end, the outline of which is arched. Both sides are similar. This somewhat triangular piece imitates in miniature the shape of a column capital, although it is almost flat. The decoration in very low relief represents the palmette, a plant motif that was very widespread in Egyptian art.

The delicately stylized work is characterized by nuanced modeling, carefully rendered details (e.g., fronds), and remarkable concern for symmetry. This piece would have been the intermediate element of a fan: mounted on a wooden handle (or a handle made of some other perishable material), it would have served as a support for bird feathers which were inserted in the holes pierced in the upper part. Waved rhythmically, they would refresh their bearers in the dry hot climate of ancient Egypt. Among the best examples of fans that have survived into modern times is the perfectly preserved specimen found in the tomb of Tutankhamun, now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

The palmette motif has been widely used by potters, especially from the early New Kingdom and into the first millennium for the manufacture of pendant amulets whose meaning would have been linked to fertility and regeneration. Compartmented boxes with flat lids in the shape of palmettes, whose motif in relief is related to the decoration of this support, date to the Late Period and the Ptolemaic period.

### CONDITION

The object is complete. The surface of the faience is covered with a brownish patina that partially hides the color of the glaze (which

was probably in the usual shades of greenish blue).

### PROVENANCE

Ex-Liechti private collection, Geneva, Switzerland; acquired at the Antiques Center, Bond Street, London, 1976.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Andrews C., *Amulets of Ancient Egypt*, London, 1994, pp. 88.

Berman L.M., *Catalogue of Egyptian Art*, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, 1999, pp. 487-488, nos. 385 and 517, no. 417.

The fan of Tutankhamun:

Wiese A. (ed.), *Toutankhamon, L'or de l'Au-delà, Trésors funéraires de la Vallée des Rois*, Basel, 2004, p. 320, fig. 3.