

HEAD OF A BULL

Greek, 7th - 6th century B.C.

Bronze

H: 8.2 cm (3.2 in)

Reference: 8033



This protome was cast using the lost wax process; it is hollow, but the thickness of the bronze is important. The surface of the metal is covered with a beautiful green patina.

The head is triangular, with finely modeled plastic shapes; further details were incised after cooling, like the folds of the skin on the neck and around the eyes, and the hair rosette in the center of the forehead, which look almost impressionistic.

This protome certainly adorned a very large bronze cauldron: it was applied directly to the rim of the vessel, following its upper contour. According to their dimensions and richness, cauldrons were generally decorated with two to four protomes of this type, which also served as handles. In addition to bulls protomes, these ornaments could take the shape of a griffin's or a lion's head, or of a siren with spread wings; sometimes, they could be simple rings.

The largest receptacles could hold several hundred liters of liquid: examples having a capacity of 300, even 700 liters have been excavated from eastern Turkey contexts (Karmir-Blur).

These objects were of extraordinary value during Ancient times already, as evidenced by Assyrian or Greek texts. In this connection, it is worth noting that Homeric heroes considered bronze cauldrons as being among the most sought-after prizes they could win after a victory in a battle or a sports competition.

These huge basins were used during certain cults and especially at banquets, to mix the water and wine that were distributed to the guests or given to the divinity. During these meetings, the cauldron, which has no foot, was placed on a tripod or on a large support with flared walls. The wine and the water, thus mixed together, were taken with a jug (oenochoe, in Greek) and then poured in cups to drink. In Near Eastern

and/or Greek iconography, scenes taking place around a cauldron are relatively frequent.

The earliest examples have certainly been manufactured in the Near East (Syria, Iran, Central Northern Anatolia), but for a short time, Greek world's craftsmen produced their own copies whose quality often exceeded the original models; stylistically, this example is close to some protomes found in the Heraion of Samos.

PROVENANCE

Acquired on the German Art Market in 1997

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