

STATUETTE OF THE GOD PAN WITH A SYRINX

Roman, ca. 1st century B.C. - 1st century A.D

Bronze

Height: 13.5 cm

Reference: 243



Half man and half goat, a horned Pan holds the syrinx, seven-reeded pipes; he plays music to attract attention of the nymphs. Small in size but powerful, with its highly animated pose and statuesque quality, the statuette may have formed part of multi-figured sculptural group or functioned as a votive in a sanctuary of Pan. The bronze is very finely detailed for its size. Pan's expressive face with pointed ears, scraggly beard, feathers on upper legs and claws, tail, as well as his muscular torso, are all clearly defined.

The god's original Greek name, Paoni, is derived from a word meaning guardian of the flocks, which accurately describes his function in the pastoral world. As a pastoral god he is a protector of shepherds who sacrifice kids, goats, or sheep in his honor and may dedicate statuettes of herdsmen to him. The son of Hermes and the nymph Dryops, Pan's original home was in the mountainous and isolated lands of Arcadia. There he became a national god of the region, even being depicted on the reverse side of the coins of Zeus Lycaeus issued by the Arcadian League. He is known as a god who inhabited vast and secluded mountain landscapes while watching over his flocks. Sanctuaries and eventually temples were constructed to honor him. At the beginning of the 5th century B.C. the knowledge and veneration of Pan spread to Boeotia and Attica, and subsequently to the rest of the Greek world. For the 5th century Greeks, he became famous for his role as their ally in the battle of Marathon, during which he helped bring victory to the Greeks by instilling fear, or panic, into retreating Persian forces (see Herodotus, Histories, VI, 105-106).

Despite Pan's popularity as a divinity, bronze statuettes of the god are rare. Their typology, often flamboyant and lively, as well as their style, a bit crude and realistic, are certainly in line with the characteristics of the god himself: commonly, he is depicted as a hybrid beast, half man, half animal: the expression on his bearded face, with its deep creases and pointed chin is somewhat animalistic. On his forehead are two

horns, his ears are pointed, his body is hairy; instead of human legs, he has the hind limbs of a goat, instead of feet, cloven hoofs (in this particular bronze he has bird's legs). He is fast and agile. The god has an active sexual drive, lusting with equal passion after nymphs and young men. His attributes are the syrinx, the shepherd's staff (the lagobolon) and the pine torch.

In the Homeric Hymn to Pan, the Greeks associated the god with the word pan, meaning all, from which he was identified in the Roman period as the universal god of all. In the hymn Pan is fondly remembered by the story of his introduction by Hermes to the gods of Olympus, after goat-god's fantastic appearance frightened his mother and she fled: But Hermes, the helper, was overjoyed in his mind and he hid the boy in the thick skin of a mountain rabbit and went immediately to the home of the immortal gods. He set him down next to Zeus and the other immortal gods, and he showed them his boy. All the immortal gods were delighted in their hearts, and more than anyone else, even Dionysos. And they decided to call him Pan because he had delighted the minds of all.

PROVENANCE

Ex- European private collection

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