

EGYPTIAN FAIENCE CYLINDRICAL VESSELS

Egyptian, 19th Dynasty

Faience

H: 5.6 cm (2.2 in) 5.2 cm (2 in)

Reference: 15202



These cups are very similar in shape: the base is slightly flared, the body is cylindrical with a straight, slightly inclined wall, and a rounded, averted rim. The pale yellow faience inscriptions mention Pharaoh Seti I: "Lord of the two Lands, Men-Maat-Re (Seti I), beloved of Osiris the great god" appears on the smaller vessel and "Men-Maat-Re (Seti I), beloved of Sokar" on the larger one. Before the firing process, the potter would have inserted the colored paste for the inscriptions into the hollows specially prepared on the surface to be decorated.

The production of small cylindrical cups has a long tradition in the repertoire of Egyptian forms in stone (Predynastic period and Old Kingdom), terracotta, and later, as here, faience and glass vessels. Bearing the name of Seti I, these two cups certainly come from a place of worship associated with the pharaoh, perhaps from Abydos, the sacred city in which Seti I had built a chapel to Osiris and another one to Sokar. Since the form and color of these ritual vessels were related to their contents, the blue color might have characterized vessels holding water or natron salt.

Usually, these small cups, which were provided with a lid, would have contained perfumed oils and unguents for cosmetic or medicinal use. As is explained in the "Ritual of Embalming", an ancient papyrus now in the Louvre, these products were also very important in the ritual sphere, since they were regularly used during mummification. At that time, this cup form was more common in the "traditional" light blue faience with black inscriptions.

CONDITION

Both vessels are complete, but the dark blue glaze is largely damaged. Some traces of glaze remain, however, intense and bright, inside and near the base of the vessels.

PROVENANCE

Acquired on the English art market in 1992;
Bonham's London, May 16, 2002, lot 421.

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