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ANCIENT EGYPTIAN LIMESTONE RELIEF FRAGMENT DEPICTING A RED PAINTED BENNU BIRD PROBABLY FROM A FUNERARY STELA

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NEW KINGDOM 1550 - 1069 B.C

SIZE: 10.5CM HIGH, 11CM WIDE, 3.5CM DEEP - 4 INS HIGH, 4¼ INS WIDE, 1¼ DEEP

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LITERATURE

TO THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS THE BENNU BIRD, IN FACT A TYPE OF GREY HERON, WAS A PHOENIX-LIKE BIRD ASSOCIATED WITH THE WORSHIP OF THE SUN, CREATION AND REBIRTH. ITS NAME IS DERIVED FROM THE EGYPTIAN VERB 'WEBEN', TO RISE, AND IT WAS THE PROTOTYPE FOR THE GREEK PHOENIX. THE BIRD WAS SAID TO LIVE AT HELIOPOLIS IN PERSEA TREES, THE TREE OF LIFE. THE GREEK HISTORIAN HERODOTUS WRITING IN THE 5TH CENTURY B.C REPORTED THAT THE PEOPLE OF HELIOPOLIS DESCRIBED THE PHOENIX BIRD AS LIKE AN EAGLE WITH RED AND GOLD PLUMAGE REMINISCENT OF THE SUN. THEY TOLD HIM THAT IT LIVED FOR 500 YEARS BEFORE DYING, RESUSCITATING, BUILDING A FUNERARY EGG WITH MYRRH AND CARRYING IT TO THE TEMPLE OF THE SUN AT HELIOPOLIS.

IN THE BOOK OF THE DEAD THE BENNU BIRD WAS REPRESENTED AS A KIND OF GREY HERON WITH LONG STRAIGHT LEGS AND BEAK. IN CHAPTER 83 THE 'SPELL FOR BEING TRANSFORMED INTO A BENNU BIRD' WAS USUALLY ACCOMPANIED BY A DEPICTION OF IT. IT IS THOUGHT THAT, FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW KINGDOM, THE BIRD

SYMBOLISED THE PLANET VENUS AND SO THE DESIRE FOR TRANSFORMATION MAY REFER TO THE CHANGING PHASES OF VENUS.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE COLLECTION OF THE LATE MONTY PASSES (1921 - 2019) FASHION MOGUL BUSINESSMAN AND ART COLLECTOR AND HIS WIFE BARBIE PASSES WHO DIED 2011

ACQUIRED EARLY 1970'S