



Amulet of the ibis of Thoth

On display

Title/Description: Amulet of the ibis of Thoth

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Faience

Measurements: h. 27 x l. 38 mm

Accession Number: 725

Historic Period: Dynasty XXVI or later (664-525 BC)

Production Place: Africa, Egypt

Credit Line: Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1979

Enormous numbers of amulets symbolising various deities have survived from Ancient Egypt, where they were favoured as votive gifts at temples and shrines, or were strung on necklaces for personal adornment (hence the suspension loops) and more especially for protection. Such amulets were particularly common in the Late Period (Dynasties xxvi-xxx), and the commonest materials used were faience and glazed steatite. Glass was relatively uncommon, and was reserved for choice examples of amulets, as in the present instance.

Thoth was the god of wisdom and scribe of the gods, and is often represented in the form of an ibis, a bird once common but now rarely if ever seen in Egypt. In the present amulet the details of the head, beak, and tail are carefully rendered, and a suspension loop is provided on the back. A small stump in front of the claws is all that remains of a feather of *maat* ('truth'). The tip of the beak is also missing, otherwise the condition is excellent.

Entry taken from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection 3 volume catalogue, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997).

Provenance

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia on the advice of Robert Sainsbury from Peter Sharrer in 1979 out of income from the Sainsbury Purchasing Fund.
