

Jasper Tawaret Fragment

Egypt

New Kingdom 1550 - 1077 B.C.

Red jasper

H: 4.5cm

This figure of Taweret is carved from a striking bright red Jasper stone and portrays the upper part of the hippopotamus goddess with her mouth open, displaying her denuded teeth. The images of goddess Taweret was used to bring good luck, mainly for the protection of pregnant women and their babies, especially during childbirth. Her threatening composition, a combination of human, hippopotamus, crocodile and lion attributes, would frighten away the evil demons and malevolent forces. The family unit was an important feature of ancient Egyptian life, both for humans and for the divine. Establishing a household and producing a child, particularly a son, was very important for the Egyptians. However, in pre-modern cultures, pregnancy, birth and the postpartum period were dangerous for both mother and child. Although we do not have exact rates of child mortality in ancient Egypt, it can be said that a mother would be lucky if half her children lived to be adults. The ancient Egyptians had remarkable medical knowledge, however hand in hand with practical applications of medicines and other 'scientific' therapies, the ancient Egyptians would also make use of magical or religious interventions to address health issues. They considered the recitation of spells and prayers as well as the use of amulets or figurines as appropriate treatments for an illness or the answer to a personal problem. Figurines of Taweret, such as this one, may have therefore been given as gifts, kept in household shrines, or dedicated at local temples in hope of, or thank for, a successful birth.

Literature:

Sotheby's & Co, 11th June 1928, Lot 317.

David Aaron Ltd, 2020, No. 2.