

**Baboon**

H: 40.64 cm

Limestone

Egypt

664-343 B.C., 26th-30th Dynasty, Late Period

A notably large ancient Egyptian limestone statue of a seated baboon. The baboon sits, facing forward, with forepaws resting atop its knees. The baboon's features are carved in high relief, with deep-set, wide almond-shaped eyes framed by pronounced cosmetic lines, extending towards the edges of the face. The long snout projects forwards below the eyes, terminating in a flat nose and broad mouth. The details of the ears and furry jowls are also picked out in relief. The baboon wears a pectoral ornament in the form of a shrine, suspended from a cord around its shoulders. The baboon's tail curls from the back, round the proper right side of the now-fragmented base.

The ancient Egyptians saw baboons as the original devotees of the rising and setting sun, and so they were often depicted with their arms outstretched in solar worship. Baboons were also associated with Thoth, the god of wisdom, science and measurement. Thoth was depicted as a dog-faced baboon or a man with the head of a baboon when in the form of A'an, the god of equilibrium. When in the guise of a baboon, Thoth was often shown with a lunar disc atop his head – the damage to the top of this statue could show where such a disc was previously attached. The chattering of baboons was thought to communicate secret knowledge, and they were frequently represented with water clocks or scales for weighing the hearts of humans awaiting their final judgement.

**Exhibitions**

Best Imports Inc. Trade Mart, Dallas 7, Texas, 1961.1

**Literature:**

Abd el Hamid Zayed, Egyptian Antiquities (Cairo, 1962), no. 4222, p. 9, fig. 9.

Western Asiatic, Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan and Roman Antiquities. Islamic Pottery and Metalwork. Indian Sculpture. African and Oceanic Art, Sotheby's, London, 14 October 1969, p. 33, Lot 169.