



STATUETTE OF NEITH

Egypt

Late Dynastic Period, XXVI Dynasty, 664 to 525 BC

Bronze, finely incised and inscribed

Height 33.2 cm Length 15 cm

Large statue of Neith with original, richly inscribed bases for Usirirdis, son of Pesdimen, born to Isetrehti. The goddess is standing on a base atop a lower base decorated with 9 bows, as a symbol of her power. The figure of a worshipper kneels in front of her (probably the donor of the statuette). Neith wears the Red Crown of Lower Egypt, a long tight-fitting sheath dress, and a wide finely engraved weskhet necklace. The head is delicately modelled, the eyes and eyebrows carefully chiselled and inlaid with silver and niello. Her slightly raised left arm, reaching forward, once held a bow and arrow. The right arm hangs by her side, hand clenched in a fist. Each arm is adorned with bracelets.

Both bases present detailed hieroglyphic inscription with slight variations of '[Neith, the great] mother of the god, mistress of Sais, may give life and health to N, Osiris the one who presides the palace of the king of Lower Egypt (Hwt-bity) may give life to N'.

Neith, whose cult has existed since the Thinite Period, was mainly worshiped at Sais and Esna. Her cult had its greatest influence during the XXVI Dynasty. As a protective goddess, she watches over the king and the deceased. In the Pyramid Texts she is associated with Isis, Nephthys and Serket, in the role of mourner. With her bow and arrows, she drives away harmful spirits. That caused her to be confused with Athena by the Greeks, who considered her to be the protector of the whole country. Like Amonet, she wears the Red Crown of Lower Egypt.

Provenance

Former private collection Carl Leonhard Burckhardt (1902-1965) Switzerland, by descent from the above

Literature

S. Schoske & D. Wildung: *Gott und Götter im Alten Ägypten*, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 1992

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C.A.R. Andrews & J. van Dijk: *Objects for Eternity, Egyptian Antiquities from the W. Arnold Meijer Collection*, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 2006