



Sicilian Silver Gilt Mounted Coral Figa. Italian, 17th Century.

2 650 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Coral



Description

A Sicilian silver gilt mounted coral figa.

Italian, first half of the 17th century.

Measures 5.9cm long excluding loose bail.

Worked from a single branch of coral, the pendant represents a small hand with the fist closed and the thumb between the index and the middle fingers, a gesture called 'mano a fico'. This form, also called "manufica", is one of the most common superstitious symbols found in the south of Italy, and tradition has it that it should be reproduced in coral, the apotropaic matter par excellence.

The carved figa clutches a palm branch which

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connects to Christian symbolism where the palm branch represents the victory of the faithful over the enemies of the soul. This symbolism is notably observed during Palm Sunday, which commemorates Jesus Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. On this day, people laid palm branches in His path, an act signifying respect and homage, leading up to His arrest on Holy Thursday and crucifixion on Good Friday. The palm branch thus becomes a powerful emblem of faith and spiritual triumph.

Figa as protective amulets have been used since the ancient world, it was believed to protect from the evil eye and other dark and magical forces and to promote fertility. The figa would have been worn from a belt or from a chatelaine containing other protective talismans.

For a similar example see 'Mirabilia corallii. Capolavori barocchi in corallo tra maestranze ebraiche e trapanesi.' Page 119.