China - Set Of 12 Zodiac Figurines - Yuan - Tl

8 000 EUR



Period : Before 16th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Terracotta

Height : 17 cm

Description

This rare set comprises twelve Chinese zodiac figurines, each modeled in terracotta and covered with ancient polychromy using mineral pigments. The figures, depicted standing, hold in their hands the animal corresponding to their sign in the zodiac cycle. Their elegant posture and the consistent presence of the small sculpted animal lend the set a strong iconographic coherence. The silhouettes are intentionally compact, with a slightly flared oval base, draped bodies, and simple faces. The clothing, painted in red, ochre, black, green, or cream, displays the shades typical of Chinese funerary and domestic statuary. The headdresses, uniform from one figurine to the next, reflect the Mongolian and Sinicized administrative iconography of the Yuan period, while the simplified drapery and matte

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polychromy evoke the aesthetic of terracotta sculptures from the 13th to the 14th centuries. The depiction of the animals--rabbit, dragon, rooster, tiger, snake, horse, goat, dog, pig, rat, buffalo, monkey--is schematic yet immediately recognizable. The group is in a consistent state of preservation: the polychromy shows typical signs of age (abrasions, slight pigment losses), but the forms remain clear, without visible fractures or major restorations. The coherence of dimensions, style, and colors indicates that this group was formed from the outset and not later reassembled. This group constitutes a complete and decorative example of Yuan-style zodiac figurines, prized for both their symbolic value and their sculptural harmony. Their complete preservation enhances their historical and artistic significance. The object is accompanied by a thermoluminescence test, confirming the authenticity of the dating. Origin: China. Period: Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). Dimensions: Height 17 cm. Provenance: French private collection. Zodiac symbolism (Shengxiao) occupies a central place in Chinese culture, associated with calendrical cycles, cosmic influences, and individual destiny. The complete sets, bringing together the twelve signs, were often placed in ritual or funerary contexts as protectors or symbolic guides of the temporal cycle.