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Syracuse "athena & Hippocamp" Litra -- With Certificate Of Authenticity



240 EUR

Period : Before 16th century

Condition : Bon état

Description

Attributed to the coinage of Syracuse under Dionysios I (405-367 BC), this Æ litra presents, in an iconographic pairing immediately recognizable to collectors of Greek Sicily, the portrait of Athena on the obverse and the hippocamp on the reverse, a composition firmly recorded in the corpora under the references CNS 45 and SNG ANS 434-46, consistently described in standard references and in sale-archive notices.
Analysis & expertise
Careful examination under ×10 magnification and raking light, with particular attention to reading the relief, assessing the coherence of the fields, and understanding the striking dynamics visible in the photographs provided, highlights on the obverse a head of Athena facing left, wearing a Corinthian helmet whose silhouette stands out

Dealer

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clearly, with the facial modeling and helmet volumes still expressive; the flan edge, naturally irregular as befits Sicilian bronzes of this module, retains a continuous border whose softening points to ancient circulation rather than any modern surface alteration.

On the reverse, the iconography reads with pleasing directness: a hippocamp oriented left, whose equine forepart--rendered in broad planes of relief--extends into a coiled marine tail, and whose reins (or bridling elements) appear as fine engraved lines, a typological detail often noted for this family of issues, reinforcing the impression of a coin "true to its type," that is, immediately comparable to the published documentation.

In terms of surfaces, the coin displays a nuanced green patina, with darker areas and a few patches of pale mineral deposits that integrate visually with the whole without obscuring the essential motifs; along the periphery, edge and flan irregularities consistent with ancient bronze production can be perceived, contributing, for the collector, to that material "breath" characteristic of Greek Sicilian coinage, where the truth of the object is read as much in the engraving as in the metallic skin.

Finally, the presence of a peripheral Greek legend can be discerned around the edge, with characters visible here and there depending on the angle of the photograph, in keeping with the reference specimens described for the type, frequently associated with the legend ?YPA on certain varieties, without the photograph requiring an exhaustive reading of every letter at every point of the circle.

Specifications

Authority / Mint: Sicily, Syracuse, under Dionysios I, period 405-367 BC.

Denomination / Metal: Æ Litra (bronze).

Metrology (cataloguing data): 7.41 g; the coin belongs to the module commonly described around roughly twenty millimeters according to comparative specimens of the same reference.

Obverse: Head of Athena left, wearing a Corinthian helmet.
Reverse: Hippocamp left, of bridled type (reins/bridling details visible depending on incidence).
References: CNS 45; SNG ANS 434-46.
Appearance: green patina.

Historical context

Dionysios I, tyrant of Syracuse from 405 BC, belongs to a phase in which the city, engaged in major conflicts and in a consolidation of power in Sicily and southern Italy, asserts its sovereignty through coinage as much as through its army; the circulating bronzes, to which this litra belongs, are part of the practical economy of a city that sees itself as both strategist and maritime power. In this perspective, the association of Athena--figure of political intelligence and martial discipline--and the hippocamp--a marine creature linked to the imagination of sea power--takes on the value of a condensed civic language, perfectly aligned with Syracuse's role as a major power of the Greek West; it is known, from commented sale notices, that these litrae exist in several varieties (presence or absence of legend, helmet details, reins more or less pronounced), naturally feeding the collector's comparative interest.

Cultural value

This piece appeals through a quality collectors consistently seek in Greek Sicily: the meeting of an iconography that is highly "signature" of Syracuse with the materiality of patinated bronze that tells of circulation, soil, time, and touch, while offering a maritime theme--the hippocamp--whose evocative power accords with the city's insular and port identity, so that the buyer receives not merely an object, but an intelligible fragment of figured history.

Traceability & guarantees

Each specimen is examined, described, and accompanied by a certificate of authenticity consistent with the standards of the art and heritage market; careful observation under ×10

magnification and raking light is an explicit step in the descriptive protocol, so that the buyer benefits from a presentation grounded in numismatic criteria and in typological comparison anchored to publicly consultable references.

The provenance is European, from an established numismatic dealer, and the acquisition is carried out through a specialized international transaction, conducted within a recognized numismatic network and validated in accordance with the demanding practices of the heritage market.