



China - Exceptional High-relief Decorative Brick Depicting A Qilin - Tang Dynasty



8 000 EUR

Period : Before 16th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Terracotta

Length : 32 cm

Width : 12 cm

Height : 32 cm

Description

Extremely rare high-relief facing brick depicting a mythological creature resembling a Qilin. China--Tang Dynasty (618-907) or later classical style. An exceptional facing brick or tile in high relief depicting a two-horned mythological creature resembling a Qilin. Captured in a remarkably dynamic pose, the creature is depicted with a compact body, its head held high, and its mouth wide open, radiating a burst of energy. Its body is entirely covered with carefully carved, stylized scales, ending in muscular legs and a sinuous, raised tail that blends into a decorative pattern of scrolls and auspicious clouds. The main face reveals the sculptural power of the mythical animal and the remarkable state of preservation of the tricolor pigments, characteristic of prestigious architectural and funerary works. The profile

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highlights the exceptional depth of the high relief, which appears almost detached from its base--a feature typical of frieze or lintel elements designed to ward off malevolent influences. The reverse side features a dense, rough gray terracotta matrix, showing signs of chipping and natural earthy concretions, evidence of a long period of burial. Presented on a removable base. The term "Qilin" refers to one of the four most sacred auspicious creatures in Chinese mythology, alongside the dragon (Long), the phoenix (Fenghuang), and the tortoise (Gui). In ancient Chinese tradition, the Qilin is a composite creature and a symbol of great good fortune. Here is what it represented: The Qilin is considered the king of furry animals. Unlike Western monsters, it is a deeply peaceful, benevolent creature endowed with great wisdom. Legend has it that it is so respectful of life that it refuses to step on even the smallest insect or break a blade of fresh grass, preferring to travel on clouds or water. Its presence is the ultimate sign that peace, harmony, and justice reign in the world. It appears to humans only during the reign of an exceptionally just ruler or to announce the birth (or death) of a great sage. The most famous example in Chinese history is that of Confucius: tradition holds that a Qilin appeared to his mother shortly before his birth, prophesying the coming of a "king without a crown" who would transform Chinese thought. In funerary and architectural contexts, as is the case with our high-relief brick, the Qilin takes on the role of a spiritual guardian. Placed on the walls of tombs or at the entrances to buildings, it uses its celestial power to ward off evil influences, purify the Qi (cosmic energy), and protect the repose of the deceased or the sanctity of the site. Origin: China. Period: Tang Dynasty (618-907). Dimensions: Height: 32 cm - Length: 32 cm - Width: 12 cm. Condition: Excellent archaeological condition, with slight chipping and normal wear consistent with its age. Superb remnants of the original polychromy, notably brick-red pigments and areas of green and

white-gray glaze or engobe, highlighting the creature's vigorous relief and sacred fury.

Provenance: Belgian private collection.