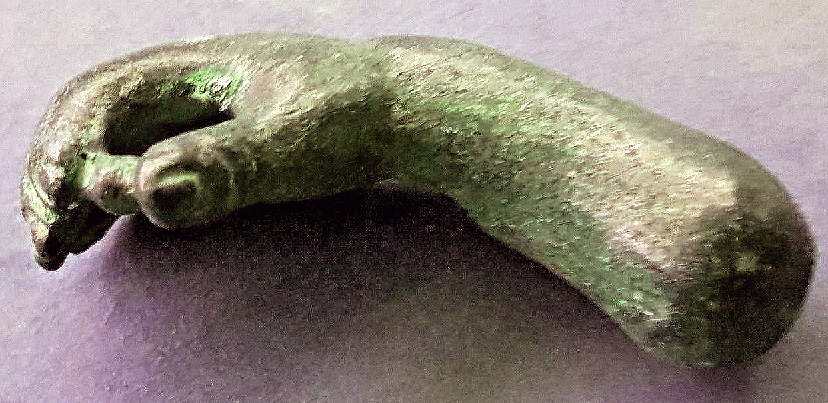
A2644-Eur-Rome-Votive Arm with Medicine Pill-200 BCE



Figs. 1-3 Eur-Rome-Votive Arm with Medicine Pill-200 BCE

**Case no.: 4**

**Accession Number:**

**Formal Label:** Eur-Rome-Votive Arm with Medicine Pill-200 BCE

**Display Description:**

This bronze votive model of a human hand holding what appears to be a medicine pill was used probably as an amulet, which was strung by the loop created by the thumb and index finger. It was probably offered as a votive to Asclepius at the Tiberina Island hospital or Asclepieion where it was reputedly found adjacent to the walls of the ashlar masonry of the model of the ship that had brought the Asclepieion and its practitioners to the Island c 300 BCE where it had been disgorged.

Models of body parts are known as votive offerings from sacred sites in the ancient world based on the assumption that many were linked to requests for divine intervention in healing health conditions in the context of a holistic mind-body.

The Asclepieia of the healing physician Asclepius and his five daughters were a popular choice for the deposition of anatomical votive models. At least some Asclepieia were specialized in certain ailments, so that Athens specialized in eye diseases and ocular health and Ponte di Nona, Italy, specialized in arms and legs (Oberhelman 2014). Rome’s Asclepieion was more of a general hospital on the Tiburina Island.

In the ancient world health was not conceived of as it would be after the seventeenth-century Cartesian model that separated the body from the mind. Cartesian curing, if narrowly conceived, separated mind and body and only needed to deal with the body, whereas healing in the ancient world can be said to have dealt with a unified whole (Strathern and Stewart 2008: 67). The Cartesian focus on the body and its constituent parts in anatomical votive models has reified researchers in their focus on material well-being at the expense of the whole person.

At least some votive models were intended to refer to a more general sense of holistic well-being: by divulging the condition of one’s bodily ailments to the divine in terms of its spiritual effect on the person it had the same force as a verbal or meditative confessional. It promoted the hope (based on faith, perhaps) that one would be *healed* if not *cured*. It is suggested that these anatomical votive models were not viewed as straightforward *material* signifiers of a person’s state of health but as an index of holistic health, both material and spiritual.

It is suggested that a sense of wellness resulted from being a communicant with the divine in sharing the experience of *healing* in a communal setting with other pilgrims and supplicants, knowing that others had done the same before, resulting in a *healing* of a person’s holistic mind-body. So, even if no direct *cure* were forthcoming, the votive cult could be said to have *healed* by instilling a sense of communal well-being.

**LC Classification:** R135.D57

**Date or Time Horizon:** 200 CE

**Geographical Area: probably, Asclepieion,** Tiburina Island, Rome

**Map:**

**GPS coordinates:**

**Cultural Affiliation:** probably Cult of Asclepius

**Medium:** bronze

**Dimensions:**

**Weight:**

**Condition: original**

**Provenance:**

**Discussion:**

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