



245. Pottery model of a Rooster

China, Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD)

H. 22 cm

W. 20 cm

Pottery figures of a rooster and a chicken, each standing firmly on both feet. They are made of grey earthenware, the plumage moulded in relief, covered with a layer of slip and highlighted with coloured pigments. These types of Han Dynasty animal figures were generally made in multiples, using twin moulds, the identical halves then looted together.

Figures such as these, were intended to be used as 'spirit goods'(mingqi) – artefacts produced especially to console, comfort and aid those who passed on into the afterlife. As such they are considered to be a good reflection of domestic life at the time. This gives us an interesting insight into how people lived and what they consumed two thousand years ago. Han tombs often contained figures of domestic animals, probably echoing the deceased's farm yard for use in the afterlife. It also indicates that farming and animal husbandry were considered important economic activities during this era.

Chickens of a similar design, but in bronze, were unearthed from the Fengmenling site M26 in 2004. Pottery chickens and roosters were excavated from the Han Yangling Mausoleum complex, Shaanxi Province, in 1998 and 1999.

Provenance:

J.J. van der Ven collection, the Netherlands