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Pair of Roman Bone Dice



A pair of ancient Roman bone six-sided dice; each cube with ring-and-dot markings disposed 1:6, 2:5, 3:4.

Ca. 1st - 2nd century AD.
Width of each: 12 mm.

Gambling with dice (latin: tesserae), though actually illegal except during the festival of the Saturnalia, was a very popular pastime among the Romans. When four dice were thrown, the highest roll was Venus (four sixes), the lowest was canis (four ones). Dice were also used in a variety of board games like Duodecim Scripta.

Cf.: Naples Museum, inv. 552, 115530, 116480, 119371, illustrated in, Pompeii, AD 79, (Boston, 1978), p. 193; also, J.P.V.D. Balsdon, Life and Leasure in Ancient Rome, (New York, 1969), p. 1566.

Formerly in an English private collection.

inventory number: 9697

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