

A large, weathered stone sculpture of a human leg and foot, positioned next to a thick, textured tree trunk. The leg is shown from the knee down, with a detailed sandal featuring straps and a sole. The stone is light brown with darker, mottled areas, suggesting age and outdoor exposure. The background is a plain, light gray.

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*Ancient Roman Leg with Sandle and a Tree
Trunk*

Ancient Roman, 1st – 2nd century A.D.

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ROMAN

Ancient Roman Leg with Sandle and a Tree Trunk

1st-2nd century A.D.

Marble

50 x 26 x 22 cm

19 2/3 x 10 1/4 x 8 2/3 in.

Provenance

Private collection, Belgum (Bruges);

Acquired by A.V., 1970s

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This fragment preserves the lower leg and sandalled foot of a life-size standing statue, broken across the thigh and surviving on its original rectangular plinth. The foot rests flat upon the ground, its toes carefully articulated and bound by the straps of a sandal, while beside the leg rises a sturdy tree-trunk support, its surface enlivened by the rounded stumps of lopped branches. The marble shows signs of wear and is lightly encrusted, softening the carved detail and lending the surface a warm, mottled patina that testifies to the work's antiquity.

The tree trunk against the leg is among the characteristic structural devices of Roman marble statuary and were used to buttress the weight of the stone that lacked the tensile strength of harder materials. The presence of the support is itself an index of date and origin, since struts of this kind became ubiquitous in Roman statuary between the late Republic and the second century A.D. Unlike nude athletic figures, which would conventionally be shown barefoot, so the sandaled foot points instead to a draped, divine, or honorific subject. Roman statues of this sort were sometimes faithful copies of admired Greek prototypes, sometimes free variants or combinations adapted to the taste of a patron, the borrowed Greek form lending beauty, importance or a heroic quality to the person represented. Though the body, head and attributes are lost, the elegant sandal and the assured cutting of the foot preserve a sense of the original figure's quality and ambition.

Datable on the basis of its type and workmanship to the first or second century AD, the high Imperial period, the fragment remains an evocative survival. Even reduced to a leg upon its plinth, it conveys both the technical accomplishment of Roman marble carving and the long afterlife of the Greek sculptural tradition that the Romans so admired and perpetuated.

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