



Collared jar with foot (kandila)

Not on display

Title/Description: Collared jar with foot (kandila)

Object Type: Vessel

Materials: Marble

Technique: Carving

Measurements: h. 305 x w. 280 x d. 280 mm

Accession Number: 656

Historic Period: Early Cycladic I (3000-2800 BC)

Production Place: Cyclades, Europe, Greece

Cultural Group: Grotta-Pelos

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1978

Large vessels such as these are well-known from graves of the early part of the first millennium BCE. Their function outside of the grave, if any, is unknown. Their function in a funerary ceremony is also hard to imagine. This example is quite large and very heavy, but even smaller examples would also have been heavy and difficult to move.

The vessel is made from a single large block of stone, and is a virtuoso piece of craftwork. A large percentage of the original block was carefully removed in order to create the final shape. With three main components (foot, middle body and upper body) the shape was complex to create and involves a high degree of symmetry. The body is undecorated (save for an incised line 5.5mm below the rim on the outside) but the vertical lugs in relief were also complex to produce. In the interior much of the volume has been painstakingly removed. Although it is very hard to estimate the amount of labour involved, it must have been on a par with some of the large figurines that Cycladic artisans would attempt in subsequent centuries.

The lugs are perforated, opening the possibility of suspension, although this is perhaps unlikely for such a heavy object. An alternative is that the holes were used to tie down a lid, very possibly a simple stone lid. No scientific studies have been done to try to understand what substances, if any, were kept in such vessels.

The main part of the body is in the form of a truncated ellipsoid. At the join with the upper body, the surface of the ellipsoid becomes almost flat. The upper body is about two-thirds the height of the main body or about 30 per cent of the entire height. The foot is hollow on the underside, though its walls are thick. It is less well-finished than the exterior, perhaps an indication it was not meant to be seen, and hence an argument against suspension (since if it were suspended, one would look up into the underside of the foot).

On the interior of the vessel the thickness of the wall increases markedly, from 11.5mm at the rim to approximately 22mm at the base of the upper body. It is much thicker toward the base of the main body.

Michael Boyd, April 2022

Further Reading

Broodbank, C., *An Island Archaeology of the Early Cyclades* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Getz-Gentle, P., *Stone Vessels of the Cyclades in the Early Bronze Age* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).
