

Terracotta Zoomorphic Askos

This object is a Cypriot vase it is dated between 1725 BCE to 1600 BCE. This piece can be viewed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The accession number of this piece is 74.51.795. The object seems to be portraying a type of animal with antlers, a flat and large tail, four legs and a large hoop halfway up the back of the object. This then would indicate that it is representing a species of deer local to the area of Cyprus. This object is 14.6 cm in height. It is thought to have been found in the province of Idalion in central Cyprus. The object is decorated with colouring in a crosshatch form with the outline of the main features e.g. legs, antlers, eyes and tail, possibly displaying the outward appearance and texture of the skin of the animal it is portraying. The object seems to be very well preserved despite the slightly faded colouring on the object itself. The object could also have been used as a children's toy due to its dimensions and its decoration. However this is unlikely as Children in the era of this object would have been working from a very young age as well as its level of preservation. Its high levels of preservation could be due to the material of the object as it is made of clay which has been known to be very well preserved. The object is a vase or vessel meaning that it would have been used for storage purposes it would have then potentially held water or even used as an object to hold possessions.



(<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/240382> 29.03.2020)

The object is utilitarian in nature as it is designed to be of more practical use rather than being a design of a purely visual and decorative nature. This would then imply that the object would have been used by the people in the lower levels of the Cypriot society as objects of a utilitarian nature would tend to be used by these people as materialism would have been second to luxury in the ancient world for those who are of a poorer class compared to those in the upper levels of the civilisation. In addition, it is likely that as this object is a vessel or vase it would possibly have been used for storage of small food items such as grain or could have been used in order to store water. It is unlikely that the object has been traded as it does in fact portray the image of a local species of deer to the island of Cyprus. (Picón, Carlos A. 2007. *Art of the Classical World in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Greece, Cyprus, Etruria, Rome.* no. 262, pp. 227, 457, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

This object is a part of a larger range of artefacts similar to itself it was therefore clearly a common object found in the Cyprus area. As already stated, its use was utilitarian in nature and would have therefore not have been used by those of a higher social standing but rather the lower classes of citizens. As it is classified as a vase and it seems to have two front facing holes which could indicate then that this object was used possibly as a modern-day watering can or a simple jug to pour water from. Few artefacts from this era in Cyprus have been found in the wider world away from the island on Cyprus this would then also indicate that these objects would not have been of high value as objects of high value that

were made commercially would have been found in many areas across the Mediterranean due to trade. It would then be safe to say that this object would have been for the lower classes in the Cypriot society. (*"THE CYPRIOT POTTERY FROM FIELD A"* Karin NYS, Karmen MIDDERNACHT 2010, pg, 124). However, there is no evidence to suggest that this object would have been used in any other form than what has been stated previously as there is little evidence to suggest that this object would have been ceremonial or religious. Therefore this object is clearly for the use of the local people rather than the elite of the time.

It is clear that these objects would have been used then by the lower classes of the area and period. It is also clear then that this object is unique to its area as few have been found in other places in the Mediterranean and therefore would be of significant historical value as its exclusivity to the island of Cyprus. Despite its use only to those of a lower societal standing its condition does tell us that it has been around no major conflict as it is intact whereas those used by those who would have fought on campaigns would have been at more risk of severe damage to the object. This potentially would have also been the case if the object were utilised as a children's toy. Therefore, we can conclude that this object would most likely have been utilised by the poor of the time and would have been used as a container for either water or food.

Bibliography

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/240382>

29.03.2020

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"THE CYPRIOT POTTERY FROM FIELD A" Karin NYS, Karmen MIDDERNACHT

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