

Basic Detail Report



Stirrup jar

Date

c. 1300-1100 BCE

Primary Maker

Unknown artist, Greek (Ancient)

Medium

Terracotta with slip

Description

Isaac Hollister Hall, Class of 1859, tutored at Hamilton College for four years following his graduation and before attending law school at Columbia University. Although he practiced law in New York City for a decade, he maintained a fascination with Near Eastern antiquity. From 1875 to 1877, he taught at the Syrian Protestant College (now American University of Beirut), where he produced significant scholarship on Syriac manuscripts and Cypriot inscriptions. It was during this period that Hall formed the collection of sixty-six ancient objects later given to Hamilton, which includes numerous glass vessels, ceramics, and oil lamps. Integral to Hall's acquisition of these objects was his relationship with Luigi Palma di Cesnola, an Italian immigrant of noble birth

who served as a Union general during the American Civil War. It is unclear how Hall met Cesnola, the US consul to Cyprus from 1865 to 1877, who, in addition to his political post, was also an archaeologist and conducted excavations in the area around Larnaca during his consulship. It is likely that Cesnola reached out to Hall to assist in identifying specific objects and translating Cypriot inscriptions. Letters now in the Hamilton College Archives show that, by 1876, the two men were in epistolary communication; in that year, Hall accompanied Cesnola on a visit to a number of sites in northern Cyprus. The collection includes objects that span the island's diverse history. Because of its strategic position in the Mediterranean along important shipping routes, Cyprus was influenced and occupied throughout antiquity by numerous cultures, including the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Egyptians, Romans, and Byzantines. The stirrup jar illustrated here is one of the earliest objects in the Hall Collection and was either imported from Mycenae or created in Cyprus by Mycenaeans, who began settling there around 1100 BCE. In 1872, Cesnola sold to the incipient Metropolitan Museum of Art a large collection of Cypriot antiquities excavated between 1866 and 1872 and ultimately became very involved in running the museum, serving as its first director, from 1879 until 1904. Hall continued to assist Cesnola in translating Cypriot inscriptions, especially after his own appointment as curator of the Metropolitan's Department of Sculpture and Casts in 1885, where he remained until his death in 1896. "I know you will do the work 'con amore,'" Cesnola wrote to him in 1883, "having been connected already with the Cypriote antiquities." (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017) One of the earliest objects in the Wellin's collection is a Mycenaean stirrup jar. Around 1100 B.C., the Mycenaeans began settling on Cyprus during the island's Bronze Age as a result of the Dorian invasion on mainland Greece. At their height of power on the island, the Mycenaeans established ten cities along the coast of Cyprus and profoundly influenced Cypriot culture. Either imported or produced directly on the island, the stirrup jar at the Wellin features three black bands around the body of the vessel, a black band around the shoulder of the jar, two handles, a painted, out-turned lip, and an open mouth. It was likely produced during the twelfth century B.C. While some stirrup jars were more ornately decorated, many were rendered simply with linear designs such as the one at the Wellin. They were originally used as containers and usually stored wine or oil (SOURCE: Ianna Recco '16, "Unpacking the Past: Highlights from the Collection: Mycenaean Stirrup Jar," Wellinformed blog (Spring 2016), <https://www.hamilton.edu/wellin/wellinformed/unpacking-the-past-1>).

Dimensions

Overall: 4 5/8 x 3 5/16 x 3 5/16 in. (11.8 x 8.4 x 8.4 cm) Handle (each): 1 5/16 x 3/8 x 1/4 in. (3.4 x 1 x 0.6 cm) Diameter (base): 1 7/16 in. (3.7 cm) Diameter (mouth): 7/8 in. (2.2 cm)