

## CYCLADIC MARBLE KANDILA

Greek-Cycladic, early 3rd millennium B.C.

Marble

H: 24.9 cm

Reference: 18867



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Kandiles and slightly hollow plates are the two best known forms of the Cycladic marble vessel repertory. The shape of the kandila is composed of three very simple elements: the bulbous body with a narrow and flat shoulder, is supported by a triangular shaped foot, which is typically entirely hollowed, and surmounted by the trunconical neck fitted with a small rounded lip. All four small vertical handles have a small hole, which served to suspend and/or transport the container with a cord; the largest examples, mostly when they were filled up, would hang from a stick and be placed on the carriers shoulders.

While the structure of the kandiles is almost always the same, their dimensions differ a lot from one example to another and vary between 5-7 cm for the smallest, and 35-38 cm for the largest vessels.

Their purpose is unknown, but two significant elements should be highlighted regarding these containers. First, kandiles, the provenance of which is guaranteed, are exclusively found at necropolises, but visible traces of use and repairs (especially on the handles) on some of them indicate that they were not only made for the tombs. On the other hand, the unpracticality of the shape should be noticed: small pieces have a very limited capacity, while the larger ones are much too heavy (over 20 kg). It can therefore be imagined that before the deposition in the tomb, they were used for rituals or cults – probably connected to the funeral sphere – the details of which are unknown today.

They come from several Cycladic islands and are generally dated to the first stage of Cycladic culture, known as Early Cycladic I and Early Cycladic I/II (in French, Cycladic Ancien I and Cycladique Ancien I/II) (approximately between 3200 and 2800/2700 B.C.). Nowadays, these vessels take their name from their fortuitous resemblance to the oil

lamps placed in the orthodox churches: in the late 1940s, three examples of prehistoric kandiles were still in use in the Panagia Katapoliani Cathedral on the island of Paros.

### CONDITION

The vessel, carved from a cubic fragment of gray-veined white marble, is whole and in excellent conditions; the foot, the handles and the lip are slightly chipped, the surface is covered with concretions. The interior and bottom of the foot show circular traces of the tools which were used to carve the stone and hollow out the object. The vase shows a slight asymmetry, one side being a bit larger and rounded than the other.

### PROVENANCE

Ex-R. Furrer collection, Zurich, Switzerland, collected in the 1950s-1960s.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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