

VANDERVEN ORIENTAL ART



Pottery Cocoon Jar

China, Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD)

Height: 22.7 cm | Width: 25 cm

Provenance:

- Princess Niloufar Pahlavi, Paris 1990-'s

TL-Tested by Oxford Authentication

A Chinese pottery “Cocoon” vessel, with an ovoid body. The high ridged neck has a wide folded rim lip and wide mouth. The main body is etched with fine vertical lines and is decorated with a drifting cloud scroll (*yunwen*) motif in red and white pigments. It stands on a high round foot, decorated with a wide horizontal band in red. The distinctive, plump ovoid form of this jar is associated with the shape of a silkworm cocoon, hence the name for this type of vessel. The silk industry was a principal source of wealth for the Chinese economy during the Han Dynasty, which may have inspired the shape of this jar.

During the time of Emperor Han Wudi (140-87 B.C.), fascination with the idea of the celestial journey and the search for immortality reached a climax. This preoccupation with heavenly realms is reflected in the ethereal decoration on

earthenware vessels. This particular type of Han Dynasty funerary object, is found in a specific area of north central China in Henan province. Pottery objects were a popular (and economical) substitute for bronze and lacquer vessels, which were used in daily life. Along with a variety of other earthenware objects, such as architectural models, attendants and animals, such storage jars were intended to serve the spirit of the deceased in the afterlife. This vessel was probably intended to hold wine or grain; the opening could be closed off with a skin and string.