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GREEK POTTERY AH 54



The first advanced civilisation of the country that we know as mainland Greece was that of the Mycenaeans. They were an outward looking and often aggressive people, trading their own local produce (olive oil, wine, wool, flax) for luxury goods such as copper, tin, gold and silver. From the fifteenth century onwards the Mycenaean civilisation spread through the eastern Mediterranean, even overturning the sophisticated Minoan culture on the island of Crete. It reached as far as settlements on the Turkish coastline. This map shows Greece, as we know it today, with the island of Crete at the bottom and the Turkish coastline on the right.

When archaeologists find pottery today they can often get some idea of the trade routes used by the ancient peoples.

The lekythos was used for storing oil (usually olive oil), and has a long slender body and narrow neck, with a single handle attached. The oil was often used at burials for anointing the dead and archaeologists have found many lekythoi in tombs. They were also used in everyday life for storing and pouring oils needed in food preparation or for adding fuel to pottery or bronze lamps. This lekythos is decorated with a classic Greek geometric pattern and dates from 475 to 450 BC. If you look inside you can see that the neck is very narrow so that the oil would trickle out quite slowly.



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A kylix is a deep, two-handled drinking cup. They were very popular with the Athenians and are known for being delicately made and decorated. This kylix is decorated with a chain of palmette plants and dates from 500 475 BC. Many similar cups have been found at Corinth, Greece. You can see that this one has been severely damaged in the past.



This flask is known as an aryballos, with its distinctive spherical shape and narrow neck. These flasks were used to contain perfume or oil, and are often shown in vase paintings of Ancient Greece being used by athletes to anoint their bodies with oil after bathing. In these pictures, the flask is sometimes attached by a strap to an athlete's wrist, or is hung by this strap from a peg on the wall. It is quite a sturdy vessel, which is important if you need to carry it around with you.

