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GREEK POTTERY AH54A



When archaeologists find Greek pottery today they can often get some idea of the trade routes used by the ancient peoples. Greek colonies (cities of Greek people in different countries) grew up all around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. At *Emporia* in Spain, *Massilia* in France (Marseilles), *Tripolis* in Libya (Tripoli) and *Olbia* (Odessa) in Ukraine and in the many Greek cities of Sicily and *Magna Graecia* (southern Italy) the Greeks traded with the native populations for locally produced materials. *Emporia* means 'market', *Olbia* means 'prosperity' and *Massilia* was ruled by rich merchants, showing how successful these trading posts were. This map shows the Mediterranean and Black Sea as we know it today. You can see Greece in the centre with Spain and France on the left, Libya at the bottom and Ukraine on the right.

Trade is a two-way process. Different localities specialised in providing different goods and in return took different products from Greece. One of the most important exports from Greek cities such as Athens and Corinth was pottery. Pottery turns up in many locations across the Greek world and beyond, and allows us to trace the old trade routes. Sometimes pottery was traded for its own sake, sometimes it was used as containers for other goods. The pottery included in this box was traded for both reasons.

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Alabastron



This small vessel would have been used to contain perfume or oil. It has a small looped handle, through which string could be passed, so that it could be hung up. This style of pottery is known as Early Corinthian and it probably dates from 625-600 BC. Corinth is a place in Greece where large quantities of this style of decorated pottery was produced and then exported all over the Mediterranean. This particular example is decorated with a picture of a crouching sphinx, a mythical winged animal that is part human and part lion. Designs like these appear to have been inspired by the art of Western Asia, familiar to the Corinthians through trade.

Kylix

This broad, shallow, cup is known as a kylix. This type of pottery was used as a drinking cup and probably used for wine. Wine was a popular drink in the ancient world but unlike today it was mixed with water and served in pottery cups, not glasses. The pottery is extremely fine and simply decorated with bands of colour. It is thought to date from 575-500 BC.



Kantharos



The larger black cup is known as a kantharos, a type of Greek drinking cup that has a deep bowl and upright handles. It was probably used for wine.
The style of this drinking cup may have been inspired by metal work coming into Greece from Eastern countries such as Phoenicia (the area in and around modern Lebanon) and Cyprus. Notice how the black shiny finish makes the cup look as though it is made of metal, rather than pottery. This style of cup was later a popular design in Etruria, central Italy. It dates from the fifth century BC.