

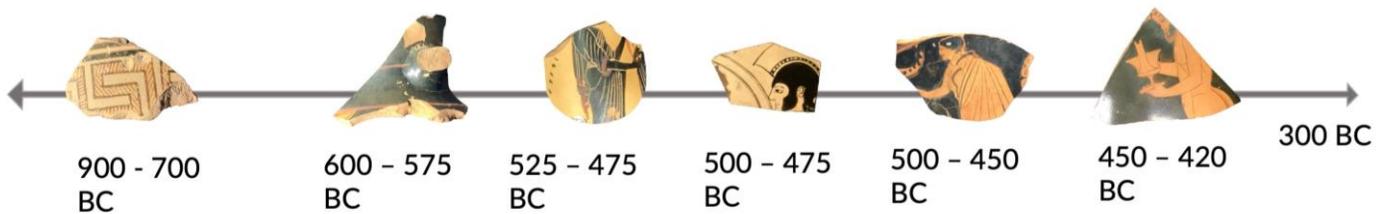
# Objects in Focus

## Classical Archaeology

### Ancient Greek pottery sherds: Shapes and Styles

The Museum of Classical Archaeology houses a collection of over 10,000 pottery sherds – broken pieces of pottery. These are rarely displayed and mostly used for teaching. Ancient pottery has its own complexity of types, styles and shapes.

#### Attic pottery from between 900 – 300 BCE



- **BCE** is the same as BC (Before Christ) and stands for Before Current Era.

#### In this handout we will explore:

- What knowledge do these fragments hold?
- Why do we collect them?
- What are the ethics of collecting pottery in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

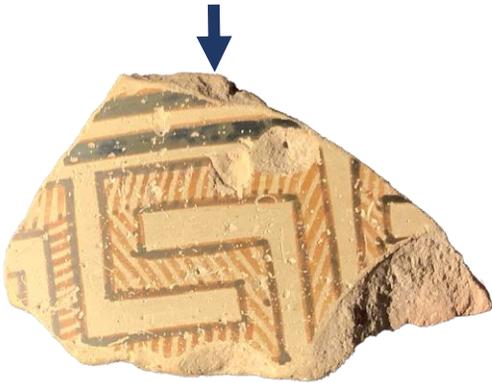
# What knowledge do these fragments hold?

## Decoration and Dating

Attic Greek pottery is usually dated through an analysis of the decoration and style. The styles are called **Geometric, Black Figure and Red Figure**

### Sherds showing examples of decoration and design

**Geometric Pottery**



**Black Figure pottery**



**Red Figure Pottery**



## Shapes and Use

Different shapes were used for different purposes. Sometimes we can tell from a sherd what the shape of the pot was, and therefore what it was used for.

**This sherd** is a fragment of a **lekythos**.



A lekythos is the name of a small, long vase usually used for storing oil. The curve of the sherd shows this very well.

Diagram of a lekythos vase, showing a sherd that could have been part of it.



## Record keeping – how sherds are labelled

Each sherd is given a **unique reference, the first part of which is made up of letters** that relate to where in the world it was excavated and the second being the number of the find.

### Sherds and their unique references



**AG 76**  
Geometric

**AG**, stands for Athens and the Agora site which is part of the Acropolis.



**UP 127**  
Black Figure

**UP**, stands for unprovenanced, this means there is no record of where the sherd or object was found.



**AL 394**  
Red Figure

**AL**, stands for Amina, which is on the coast of Syria and Turkey.

## What are the ethics of collecting pottery in the 21st century?

The Museum of Classical Archaeology continues to acquire objects, but there are international agreements in place to protect a country's cultural heritage and the trafficking (illegal sale of) of cultural objects. The most important of these being the 1970 UNESCO Convention.

Generally speaking, at the Museum, any newly acquired object, must have records of official excavations, and permissions for it to leave its country of origin.

However, we (and many other museums) collect objects which have been recorded to have exited their country of origin before 1970 UNESCO Convention. **Our most recent acquisition, this Cypriot aryballos (small jug)** is an example of this.





## Behind the Scenes at the Museum

### Meet Justyna Ladosz

Justyna was the Education and Outreach Lead at the Museum of Classical Archaeology, where she has worked for the last two years. She also works at the Cambridge University Library on a Greek Manuscripts Project. She likes ancient pots and books.

## Museum of Classical Archaeology

### Location

Faculty of Classics, Sidgwick Avenue  
Cambridge, CB3 9DA

### Opening Hours

Tuesday-Friday: 10am-5pm, Saturday: 2-5pm, Sunday- Monday & Public holidays: Closed

