A beginner's guide
To choosing your first archaeological artefact:
What to choose ?

The beginner will find on our website much useful advice to think about in choosing their first purchase. What will you choose?
Dr Bron Lipkin presents here different categories of items which are both attractive and affordable.

Dr. Bron Lipkin, a collector for nearly 40 years, now also a dealer and member of ADA (Antiquities Dealers Association) and owner the site: **http://www.collector-antiquities.com/** which apart from offering a wide selection of antiquities for sale offers much advice for collectors and concerns itself with the identification of fakes particularly.

Summary :

Roman

Two types of Roman artefact are extremely common and can be relatively inexpensive: Roman terracotta oil lamps and small Roman glass bottles. Though both are in the category of “rather ordinary things” both can be aesthetically attractive and interesting.

Roman oil lamps

Although artificial lighting was common in ancient times the ancient world must still have been a relatively dark place at night. Candles, made from wax or tallow must have been the easiest available means of creating portable lighting but such artefacts seldom survive archaeologically. Lamps using olive and other vegetable oils have however survived in very large numbers and have been studied very extensively. A great deal of information is available about them. Some Roman lamps were made of bronze, but fired terracotta was the most commonly use material and small lamps, often quite decorative, with a single filling hole and a nozzle for a single wick were manufactured in the many millions.

Most of these terracotta lamps were made using moulds, usually also made of terracotta, or of gypsum, a quite easily carved mineral, in well organised workshops which manufactured well standardised products. The most common forms had a central circular area, the discus, in which was the filling-hole and the discus was very often decorated in various designs and motifs in low relief. The range of decoration included myths and legends, scenes from everyday life, animals, hunting, public entertainments such as fighting gladiators, erotic scenes (both these categories especially widely faked!) and in later Roman times, Christian symbolism. (Jewish lamps with symbols such as the menorah are also found but are fairly rare and generally very expensive).

Styles and decorations popular in Italy were often imitated in workshops in other distant provinces but it is usually fairly easy to distinguish between Italian and provincial lamps. Lamps could be directly copied by using an existing lamp as the archetype and making a mould from it or by creating a hand-made archetype. Many lamps have the name of the maker or workshop on the underside of the lamp, and this is common on the usually fairly plain and undecorated lamps known as *Firmalampen* ('factory lamps' in German), a type which was especially used by the provincial military in the Roman provinces. One well known factory name is that of Fortis, and his products were evidently copied outside his workshop in Italy, or perhaps Fortis himself had factories in the provinces.

In addition to the many basic circular or ovoid lamp shapes with or without a handle and a single nozzle, lamps were also made with two or more p nozzles. The nozzle design is often very helpful in dating lamps. Terracotta lamps were also made in a variety of much more elaborate forms representing human heads, animals and many other shapes. These are known as plastic lamps ('plastic' in the sense of meaning 'modelled or moulded').

Roman lamps are important and useful finds on archaeological sites as they can be indicative of trade patterns and can often also be fairly well dated.

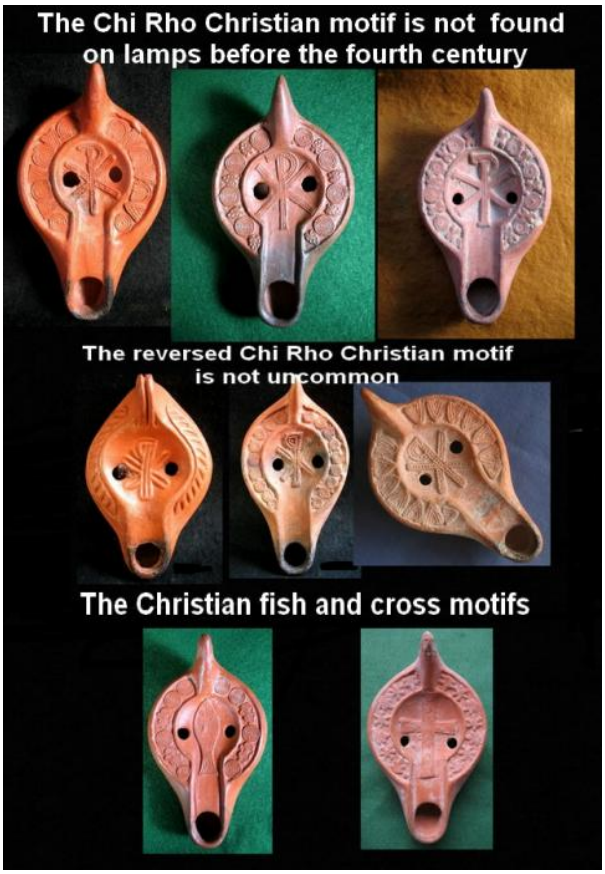
Lamps of the Roman Empire and wide areas of influence can be divided into categories in various ways, but a conventional one is this:

Volute: these are the early mould made Roman Imperial type with pronounced volutes extending from the nozzle which is fairly angular, and these lamps were mostly made in Italy. They have a large discus, generally no handle, and often elaborate and attractive decoration.

High Imperial: these are the later Roman lamps. The shoulder (the area surrounding the discus) is wider with a smaller central discus and they generally less decorative. These lamps do have handles and short plainer nozzles which do not have volutes and are rounder at their ends.

Frog lamps: Is a specific regional style of lamp exclusively manufactured in Egypt between the 1st and 3rd centuries. The frog is the Egyptian god, Heqet.

African Red Slip Ware lamps: are particularly common on the market. These were made in the North African Roman province other than Egypt but are found elsewhere as they were widely exported. They were covered in a red slip and can be quite decorative, both on the shoulder and on the discus. Grooves run from the nozzle to the pouring hole and they fairly often have more than one hole. They date from around the late 3rd to the 5th century.



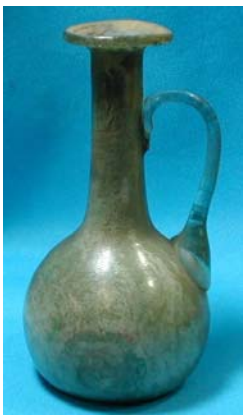
Slipper lamps: are ovoid in shape with an angular lug handle. They are mostly of Levantine origin and are also very numerous on the market. They were produced between the 3rd to 9th centuries. Decorations include vine scrolls, palm wreaths, and with Greek inscriptions as well. There are many sub-categories of this type of lamp.

Factory lamps: also called *Firmalampen (*from the German), are very widely found, quite simple in design and normally with little or no decoration at all. They have a well channelled elongated nozzle and the majority have the makers stamp on the underside. The earlier of this type come from Italy and Southern Gaul between 1st century and 3rd centuries, but they were exported to all corners of the Roman Empire and in indeed there were probably provincial factories making these as well.

Roman glass bottles

Ancient Roman glass bottles are plentiful and inexpensive enough to meet the pocket of even the most modest collector.

The earliest man- made glass was produced well over 2000 years before the Roman Empire. Core formed and cast glass was produced, although in small quantities in ancient Egypt and in Mesopotamia. Very ancient glass was often made purposely to imitate semi-precious stones particularly lapis lazuli and turquoise. In fact so good was this early technology that without testing it is sometimes almost impossible to distinguish from the actual stone.



Glass vessels were initially available only to the very wealthy and generally only in rather small sized vessels. They were made by core forming, (around lumps of clay) casting, cutting and grinding and some of the early cast and cut glass can achieve an extremely high level of technical skill such that hardly anyone nowadays has the skill to make. The invention of glass *blowing* was around the middle of the first century BC along the Syro-Palestinian coast in the area occupied by the Phoenicians. This simple invention resulted in an enormous increase in relatively cheap mass produced glass vessels of a wide variety of shapes and decorative detail. It was very much quicker to manufacture vessels in this way and it

resulted in thinner walled vessels and needing therefore less glass in the process; this method also required less finishing after manufacture. The invention of free blowing rand blowing into moulds, rapidly overtook all other methods, though to some extent these earlier techniques continued to be used in the first century, especially very elaborate and for even then, very expensive pieces of glass. One can nowadays own a Roman glass bowl, or drink form a Roman glass beaker, or wear ancient jewellery made up from glass beads.

Bottles, jugs, small perfume bottles, beakers, plates were produced in glass. Glass drinking beakers mostly replaced the pottery types and by the mid-first century they had ceased altogether. The invention of glass blowing really revolutionized ancient glass production, putting it on an equal footing with the other major industries of pottery and metal ware production.

Much of the inexpensive glass on the market, small bottles and *unguentaria* were made in the Eastern reaches of the Empire, in Israel, Jordan and Syria and indeed this is where they have been found in large numbers, protected from the ravages of time by the dry sand in which they were buried. It is often very obvious from the differential wear on a glass vessel how it lay in the sand; with one part more exposed to the elements and showing a different type of degradation.

One type of mainly 1st century small Roman glass vessel is called a tear bottle. It is however a Victorian myth that they were used in Roman times to capture tears.

The sand used to manufacture ancient glass contained iron and manganese. The iron ions gave Roman glass it's basically characteristic green colour and the manganese oxide produced pink to violet colours. The sand used also often had sodium sulphate in it which produced yellow to dark yellowish- green colours.

The glassmakers also deliberately added various minerals to create specific colours. Blue glass was made by adding copper containing compounds such as azurite. Darker blues were produced by added cobalt-rich minerals, such as asbolite. Yellows and umber were produced with iron oxides. For yellow glass silver oxides were often added. A brilliant-yellow was achieved by mixing antimony and lead. For white glass tin was added.

Almost colourless glass, which was particularly popular in the 1st century could be created by carefully selecting silver-free sand, but more commonly manganese and, particularly, antimony, was found to be the most effective decolourant agents. Bold strong colours were popular in the first century but by the third century colours were much more muted and colourless glass again became popular.

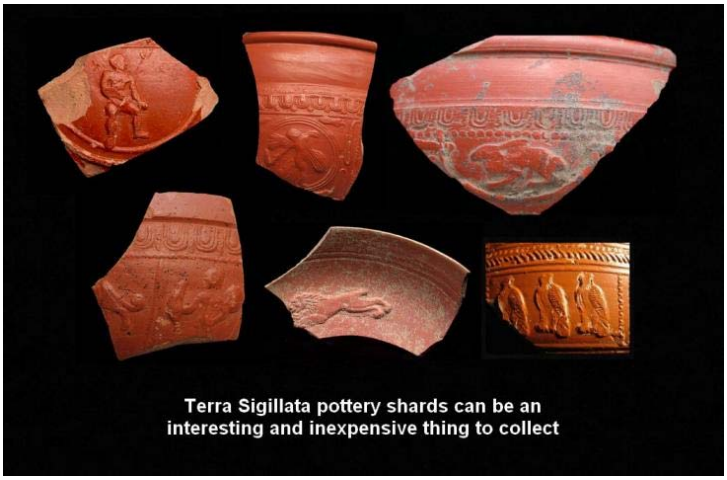
The ravages of time and the chemical changes in and on the surface of glass objects can create the wonderful colourful effects of iridescence. This is created by weathering and deterioration on the surface and within the glass itself as well. The iridescence is due to the refraction of light by very thin layers of weathered glass, on the surface, or within its internal structure.

How much a glass object weathers depends on burial conditions and what type of flux aid was used and other impurities. Generally glass made in the western provinces with potash (potassium containing compounds) has less iridescence than glass from the Eastern Mediterranean areas where glassmakers used natron which is a naturally occurring mixture of sodium carbonate and bicarbonate. Such pieces are often prized by collectors and generally command a price premium. Be aware that surface iridescence can often be very unstable and flakes of it can easily fall off!

North African lamps and pottery

A wide range of fine red-slipped table wares and red coloured coarser cooking and table wares were produced in Roman North Africa, in what is now Tunisia, and widely exported around the Mediterranean and to the north-west provinces during the 2nd to 6th centuries. This type of pottery is fairly widely available of the market.

The better of this ware is distinguished by a thick-orange red slip over a rather granular clay fabric. The interior surfaces of are completely covered in the slip, while the exterior is often only partially covered, particularly on later examples.



The slip helped to make vessels impermeable. African red slip was produced from the late 1st century BC right into the 7th century.

There is a very wide range of forms in this North African red slip ware. Some of the earlier plates, bowls and cups, before the middle of the 2nd century follow the styles of *terra sigillata* types from Italy and Gaul, but with applied “barbotine” or roulette or stamp decoration.

Greek pottery

There is a great quantity pottery on the market from the South Italian Greek colonies established on the coastal areas of Southern Italy and also in Sicily. This is mostly *Red Figure Ware* of the 4th and 3rd centuries BC.

Workshops in Italy were established in the mid-5th century BC by potters from Athens to cater for the local market at Teano and Paestum in Campania and Canosa and Ganthia in Apulia, and in Sicily; though after the mid 4th century Apulian workshops became much more productive than the other centres of production. In terms of the numbers of types available they are Apulian>Campanian>Paestan >Lucanian >Sicilian.

Apulian vase painting had a major influence on the other South Italian production centres. Apulia also produced fairly simple black-glazed vessels with a very high gloss which was thought to have been a deliberate mimicking of the metal types they were copied from. They also produced a large repertoire of shapes with painted decoration in several colours; this is the very commonly found Gnathia ware pottery. Apulian artists tended to utilise, coiling tendrils and flower and vine and leaf forms, especially grape vine motifs. Frequent use is made of stylised portrait faces of “ladies of fashion” and of nymphs and satyrs.

***Note** : We'll mention here the shape names given to ancient Greek pottery which are many and various and which might seem very mysterious to a beginner: You'll find on our website a detailed and illustrated catalog of the shapes and uses of ancient Greek pottery.*

Campanian vessels were often in a lighter brownish clay fabric which was covered with a slip that developed a pinkish or red tint after firing. The Campanian potters preferred smaller vessel types, but also produced the larger hydriai and bell craters but many of the typical Apulian vessel shapes, like volute and column kraters, the rather elaborate loutrophoroi, rhytons and the newly invented nestoris amphorae are not found in the Campanian repertoire. The repertoire of motifs is also more limited than Apulian. Subjects include youths, women, Dionysiac scenes, birds and animals, and often warriors as well. The Campanian painters seem to have favoured painting female figures with a white skin, while leaving male figures in more common red. They also used a larger palette of colours, adding purple red, yellow and white details.

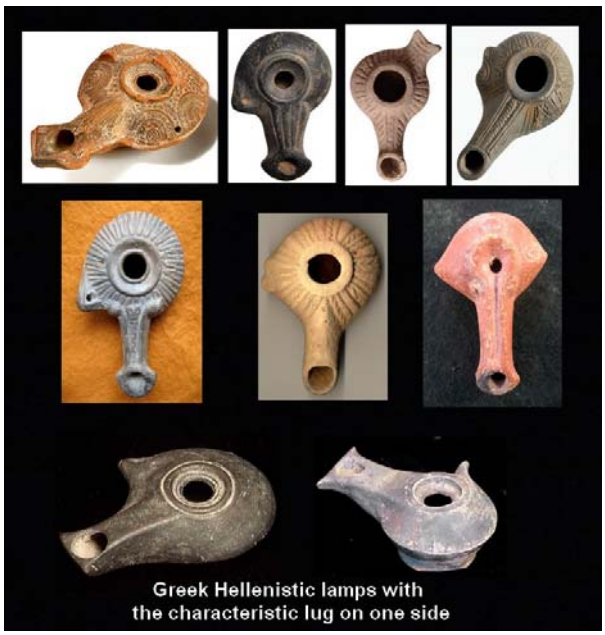
The Lucanian vase painting tradition began around 430 BC. They were the first to paint the new nestoris vase type. Mythical or theatrical scenes are common. Lucanian vase painting ended at the start of the last quarter of the 4th century BC and such pieces are relatively rare.

The Paestan vase painting style was the last of the South Italian styles to develop. The Paestan potters and painters were established by Sicilian immigrants around 360 BC. The first workshop is known to have been set up or at least managed by two named individuals, Asteas and Python. They are the only South Italian vase painters known from inscriptions. They painted mostly bell kraters, neck amphorae, hydriai, lebes gamikos, lekanes, lekythoi and jugs, and much more rarely pelikes, chalice kraters and volute kraters. Characteristic of Lucanian painting are lateral palmettes, a pattern of tendrils with a calyx known as "the Asteas flower", crenelation-like patterns on clothing and often curly hair hanging down over the back of the figures. Figures which bend forwards resting on rocks are common. Special colours are used often, especially white, gold, black, purple and various shades of red.

The typical Sicilian style only developed around 340 BC. Sicilian painted pottery is relatively rare on the market.

The "Gnathian style" developed in Apulia is probably the least expensive type and very plentiful on the market. Named after the name of the site of Gnathia (present-day Egnazia) located on the Adriatic coast of Apulia. The special technique used for this style was the application on a coat of black slip and the use of three colours: red, white and golden yellow, which were used to paint the details. Sometimes lines were scored into the surface to produce further decorative details. The pottery decorated in “Gnathian style” is generally smallish in size: pelikes, lekythoi, alabastra, and skyphoi. An exception are the larger kraters, made in the earliest period of Gnathia Ware production.

Almost all of the pottery forms developed the Greek homeland were also produced in South Italy. South Italian ware however depicts many ancient Greek dramas and myths which are not shown in mainland Greek pottery. South Italian potters also developed some innovations. For instance, Apulian potters take the volute krater and loutrophoros to new heights of elaborate fancy, making them far more elaborate than their Athenian prototypes. Apulian potters, who seemed to have a liking for the ornate and elaborate, take traditional forms such as the Panathenaic amphora, the oinochoe, the lekythos, render them slightly smaller in size but exaggerate their particular individuality and add such as volute handles, moulded gorgon faces and end up producing rather unusual new varieties of pottery shape and detail



New forms also developed from borrowing from local Italic cultures. In Campania, the bail amphora was invented. This is an amphora shape which has a single handle at the top across the mouth rather than the usual double handles on the neck or shoulder. Local forms made by native peoples were also borrowed into the South Italian repertoire. The Messapian trozzella is borrowed and becomes the nestoris, an elaborate form having a large belly, a pair of lug handles, a pair of neck to shoulder

handles, and moulded rosettes. The other major indigenous peoples, the Daunians also created a form of the nestoris, borrowed from their neighbours, the Messapians.

Egyptian amulets

Small faience amulets made in moulds but sometimes with added incised detailing are extremely plentiful on the market and can be very attractive. Many faience amulets can still retain a wonderfully coloured and often still quite glossy surface glaze.

An amulet is a small object that a person carries or wears, such as on a necklace or bracelet in the belief that it will magically provide a special power or protection. Some amulet types were for these reasons also placed among a mummy's bandages or sewn into them to ensure protection of the deceased in the afterlife.

Small representations of animals were made as amulets even in the Predynastic Period. In the Old Kingdom most amulets also were mostly animal forms or were hieroglyphic symbols. Amulets depicting recognizable gods and goddesses begin to appear in the Middle Kingdom and in the New Kingdom there was a further increase in the range of these forms. With the Third Intermediate Period there was a peak in the quantity of amulets and in many ways also a peak in their technical quality though again in the 26th dynasty very fine amulets were produced. Later in the Late Period the quality of amulets declines somewhat. While there are some very fine Ptolemaic Period amulets the quality of amulets in the Roman period is generally poor and not great in number at all.

Egyptian scarabs

The scarab dung beetle lay its eggs in a lump of dung which it rolls along with its back legs. The ancient Egyptians saw this action of the beetle a representation of the sun on its course through the heavens, rolled, they thought by a gigantic beetle. Scarabs are therefore associated with the Egyptian god, Khepri who was shown in beetle form and who, they believed rolled the sun across the sky. They

also thought that the hatched offspring arose spontaneously from within the dung and so the scarab beetle also became a symbol for *coming into being* and rebirth. Khepri, literally means "He who is Coming into Being".

Scarabs were worn both as jewellery and as amulets in very ancient Egypt and from the late middle Kingdom, in the 12th dynasty were also extensively used as seals. For this purpose they were incorporated into a ring which could be worn or as is clearly the case with many, simply strung from a thread, a necklace or bracelet. The Heart Scarab is a very particular type of scarab, which had specific hieroglyph inscriptions on it in and they were placed over the heart of the deceased to keep it from confessing its sins during the interrogation in the "Weighing of the Heart" ceremony which is an important burial ritual seen on many painted papyri.

Types of scarabs

Among the kinds of scarabs are: ornamental scarabs, heart scarabs, winged scarabs, scarabs with the name of a king or queen, with the name of private persons, invariably officials occupying specific offices of the administration, scarabs with good wishes and mottos and other formulae, scarabs celebrating the new year and scarabs decorated with figures and animals, and finally those with symbols of unknown meaning.

The scarab amulet and seal form was copied well outside Egypt's borders. Very many scarabs have been found in Palestine and other areas of the Near East, even in Greece, Spain, Italy and Sardinia.

Material

From the beginning, the majority of scarabs were mostly carved out of a soft stone called steatite and coated in a variety of coloured glazes, mostly in shades of blue or green. When the steatite was baked to form the glaze it became much harder in being transformed into ensteatite. The glazes on scarabs generally tend to wear away and most steatite scarabs are brown or white. Because of the specific minerals in the different coloured glazes applied to the scarabs, blue glazed scarabs tend to go white while green glazed scarabs tend to go brown.

Scarabs were made in a wide variety of other materials, such as carnelian, lapis lazuli, limestone, schist, serpentine, glass, and alabaster. In the 12th Dynasty and later, although undecorated, they were also made in amethyst. However by far the commonest scarabs on the market are made in steatite and in faience which was especially favoured in the New Kingdom. Gold and silver was used but are extremely rare.

The backs of scarabs can sometimes be quite attractively done.

Some 19th dynasty hunt scene scarabs

Pottery of The Holy lands

Neolithic Period

Pottery made its appearance in the later phases of the Neolithic Period in the Levant. The shapes are not refined, the fabric coarse, and without the benefit of the potter's wheel these handmade artefacts often show their manner of manufacture in having been made by building up coils of clay, one above the other, and then smoothing down the joints between the coils. One often also sees impressions on the underside from the reed mats on which the clay stood while being made. These early terracotta vessels often have some incised or painted decoration on their surfaces. The variety of shapes is limited, being mostly bowls and storage vessels.

Chalcolitic Period

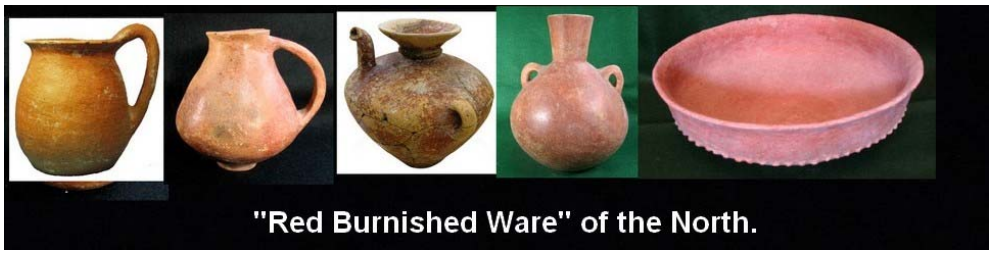
During the transition from the Neolithic period to the Chalcolitic period (from prehistory to protohistory at the time of the invention of writing), important changes occurred in the production of pottery, both in the variety of shapes and in the types of decoration. A change was also introduced in the potter's technique: vessels were now in part produced on a slow potter's wheel. By the late Chalcolithic period, there were several regional cultures in Palestine each producing its own distinct pottery ware.

Early Bronze Age

One of the characteristics of this period in the Levant is the presence of very different regional cultures in Palestine. The division into groups within these cultures is based mostly upon on the decoration of their typical pottery wares. Buff ware vessels painted with crisscross bands in dark-or light brown, red and yellowish paint called "Line Painted Ware" and are found mainly in the South. Vessels with a burnished red slip (the burnishing done with a smooth pebble) form another large group called Red Burnished Ware which are mostly from the North. A third group consists of gray-burnished vessels which come mainly from sites in the north as well.

"Line Painted Ware" of the Southern Culture

While burnishing is typical of the northern culture, red painted wares are common in the southern culture contemporary with it. The repertoire of this southern type of pottery consists of bowls of different and unusual shapes, "teapots", jars, jugs and juglets. Pottery of this culture was found at Ai, Jericho and Jerusalem.



Typical of Early Bronze Age II are plates and dishes with red slip and burnished, chalices on a high foot, spherical juglets with double handles, jugs with high and narrow necks, jars and storage pithoi. Some of the jars are decorated with combed decorations in crisscross patterns as well.

Of special interest is the important group of so called Abydos Ware from Palestine found in the royal tombs at Abydos in Egypt. These are mainly jugs with handles attached to the rim and a very typical stump base. Many of the vessels of the previous phase continue in the Early Bronze Age III but some new shapes, such as the chalice, make their appearance.

A completely different type of pottery was made at Beth-Yerah and was named after that site (also known as Khirbet Kerak ware). These are large bowls, jugs and jars. Later vessels of this type were also found at Beth-Shean, Megiddo and other archaeological sites. The pottery is all handmade, not wheel made, and many vessels have a strap or loop handle. But it is the decoration which really distinguishes this type. The vessels were covered inside and out with a heavy slip into which oblique lines were incised. The slip fires to a black colour on the outside and to a red colour on the inside and was very highly burnished to a glossy effect. The origin of this group is as yet unknown but could be quite some distance away, south-west of the Caspian Sea. They very rarely come onto the market.

Middle Bronze Age

Middle Bronze Age I

Pottery of this period comes mainly from tombs, rather than domestic sites. In this period, too, there are again distinct northern and southern cultural groups. The vessels of both these cultures are now spherical or cylindrical with flat bases. Most lack handles or have small loop handles. Though the bodies of these vessel types were hand-made, the neck was turned on a wheel and then luted onto the body. The decoration is limited: incised straight and wavy lines. The northern culture decorated its vessels with single lines while the southern culture preferred combing and thus producing multiple parallel lines. The northern culture vessels are mostly spherical while cylindrical shapes were more common in the southern culture types.

Middle Bronze Age II A-B

The main technical advance in pottery of this period was the invention of the potter's fast wheel. This allowed them to make much more sophisticated shapes such as the carinated bowl. (Carinated means a sharp change of angle of the vessel wall, usually at the point of maximum diameter. This may be in the upper or lower part of the vessel). Bases are generally flat, and although painted examples are known, the decoration mostly consists mainly of red burnishing. Many vessels are not decorated at all and have the natural colour of the fired clay. In some, it is clear that the shape has been copied metal

types. Some carinated shapes from Middle Bronze Age II stand on a high, hollow foot. There are also chalices standing on a high foot with carinated or round sides. Also quite common are small cups with double loop handles. The larger krater and bowls of this period are rounded with either rather narrow mouths or with very wide mouths and sometimes standing on rather characteristic three looped bases beneath. The jars are with or without handles, and are oval in shape. Some of the jars are decorated with reddish bands or wavy lines. Juglets are very common and come in a large variety of shapes. Some of the piriform (pear-shaped) juglets have trefoil lips: (the rim folded into three parts) Some albeit rare examples have animal decorations upon them.

Middle Bronze Age II

During this period, in which Palestine was ruled by the Hyksos who took over control in Egypt, a special type of juglet made its appearance. These are mostly piriform in shape, with a double loop handle, burnished black, dark gray or dark brown, and decorated with finely impressed dots arranged in patterns within a horizontal and filled in with white pigment. They are called Tell el-Yehudiyeh Ware juglets named after the site where they were first identified by the famous archaeologist Flinders Petrie. In this period, close trade relations were established with Cyprus and other parts the Eastern Mediterranean. Thus Cypriot pottery, especially Red-on-Black Ware, White Painted Ware and White Slip Wares are commonly found in Palestine deriving from this period.

Late Bronze Age I-III

Bowls of the earlier phase of this period are much like the carinated bowls of the preceding Middle Bronze Age II. Local imitations and copies of the Cypriot White Painted bowls are also common. The later phase of the Late Bronze Age has bowls with tapering or rounded sides. These have red and black bands on the insides. Carinated cups and chalices are also found in this period. Kraters are numerous and are often richly decorated: mostly limited to the upper part of the bowl and consists of metopes (defined bordered areas of design) which are geometrical, animal or floral. These types of vessel have vertical or horizontal bar handles. The typical cooking-pots are round and without handles. Jars are oval at the beginning of the period but become taller and more elongated and pointed in the later phases of this period. They have usually two large “ear handles” centrally on the body. Some of the jars have painted bands on the shoulder in red, brown, white or often a combination of two colours. There shapes of jugs and juglets is very various: biconical jugs are decorated with black and red metopes.

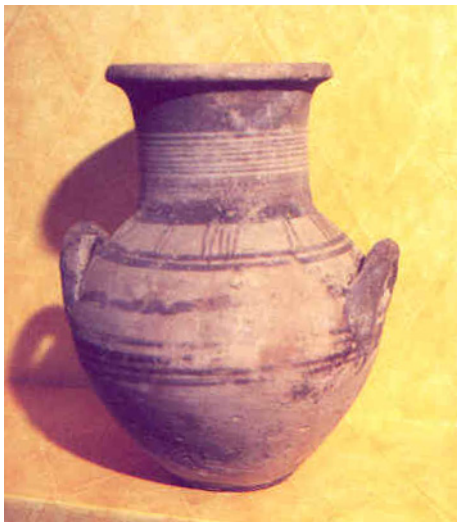
The most lovely of the Late Bronze Age vessels are those called Bichrome Ware. These are mostly spherical jugs with tall and narrow necks, a large loop handle, and decorated with painted bands in various patterns. These types are believed to have been made by potters at Tell el-Ajjul. The body of these jugs is divided by red and black bands into triangular metopes in which are painted geometric or animal, bird, or fish decoration. This type of ware is more common in Late Bronze Age I and rather more rarely found in the Late Bronze Age II.

Another rather attractive type of pottery typical of this period is the 'Chocolate on White Ware'. These are footed bowls, jugs and craters covered with a thick white slip and burnished vertically on the wheel. They are then painted with bands, both straight and wavy and with distinct metopes as well. Another similar group consists of kraters and some bowls with metope decoration of geometrical stripes in which gazelles are painted standing in front of a palm tree. Birds and crabs are is also found as decorative motifs. Flasks are lentoid (round bottles with a narrow neck) with double handles and the body painted with concentric circles. In this period, too, there is evidence of much imported pottery-mainly from Cyprus and Mycenae.

A distinct group of imported pottery from Cyprus is Base-Ring Ware. The name Base Ring Ware comes from the base of the vessel, which is made in the shape of a ring, and is added on after completion of the body. The ware is hand-built, and usually has quite thin walls. The monochrome fabric is fired to different shades of red and brown, often with a black core, and covered by a red, brown, or black slip which is usually burnished. It is often decorated with relief lines (Base Ring I), or painted with matt white linear decorations (Base Ring II), thought perhaps to imitate the white latex oozing from the cuts of an opium poppy head; a theory put forward first by Merrilees. These very distinctive jugs, with a slender oblique neck, standing on a ring base are known as a 'bilbil'. Analysis of substances found inside some bilbils has shown that they were used to store opium. The shape of the jug is, when turned upside down, is strikingly that of an upturned poppy head. It is uniquely Cypriot, and as such, was extensively traded and highly valued in the ancient world. Its presence in archaeological strata is diagnostic for the Late Cypriot period.

Among the Mycenaean imports to the Levant are the kylix, the pyxis, flask, and the very characteristic stirrup vessels with painted decoration in horizontal bands, spirals and ivy leaves. Mycenaean vessels also had their local imitations which are usually not as finely made and with less precise painting and an inferior gloss finish.

Iron Age



The transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age shows a marked change both in shape and decoration of the pottery. The rounded shapes of the Middle and Late Bronze Age become much more angular and the painted decoration is replaced by a variety of burnishing which becomes the main decoration. In certain pottery forms, a difference is again seen between the pottery of the north and that of the south. In bowls, the north has a very wide range of shapes. The southern group of pottery has more or less the same shapes but shows irregular burnishing and the horizontal handle is more common than in the north. In Iron Age II, hand and wheel burnishing becomes established in the north. In Iron Age III there is some development and the angulation, (change in the profile) which in the earlier phases was closer to the rim, moves down now closer to the middle of the body. In the south, regular wheel burnishing becomes predominant. Heavier bowls are often having four loop handles rather than just two.

Chalices (bowls on a high and, hollow base) are a very common type of Iron Age vessels. Few of these have any slip. Craters of this period are also typical and take the form of a deep, heavy bowls with two, four, or even more multiple loop handles at the rim. Some are decorated with metopes in red on the upper part of the body.

The northern type cooking pot is angular, has a rounded base whereas in the south, some angular pots are present but rounded deep pots are more common. The jars of Iron Age I are mostly an obvious continuation of the Late Bronze Age II oval jar type. In the later phases, other shapes are found such as jars with angular shoulders, called 'sausage jars', and they often have wider types. Holemouth jars, reminiscent of the Chalcolithic type are also found. Interesting is the oil jar with a spherical body, three handles and a bell-shaped spout on which the dipper juglet could be placed; interestingly this is also a feature of some large Early Bronze Age vessels. Many storage jar handles found in the south were stamped with royal seals. The repertoire of jugs and juglets show a wide variety of probable uses, with every size of opening: wide and narrow, plain and trefoil, and some even provided with spouts and strainers: the latter thought possibly to be for straining beer. One of the most

elegant jugs of the Late Iron Age is the decanter (or water jug). It has an angular shoulder, a narrow neck, wide mouth and one vertical handle. Another commonly found form is a small black burnished juglet with a spherical body, a narrow neck and one handle. These occur mostly in the south in Iron Age II and III and may have been oil containers.

The so-called Philistine pottery is another distinctive group of its own. The most common types are the krater, the jug and the flask. Some of the jugs also have a strainer spout and are called 'beer jugs'. While both the shape and decoration of the Philistine pottery shows the influence of in Mycenaean pottery, Egyptian and local Canaanite influences do certainly persist as well. These vessels have painted decoration in red and black, sometimes simply geometrical but the decoration is typically divided into metopes and very commonly seen is a bird usually shown preening itself beneath one raised wing. Animals and men are also depicted. The later Philistine ware is not as finely done as the earlier.

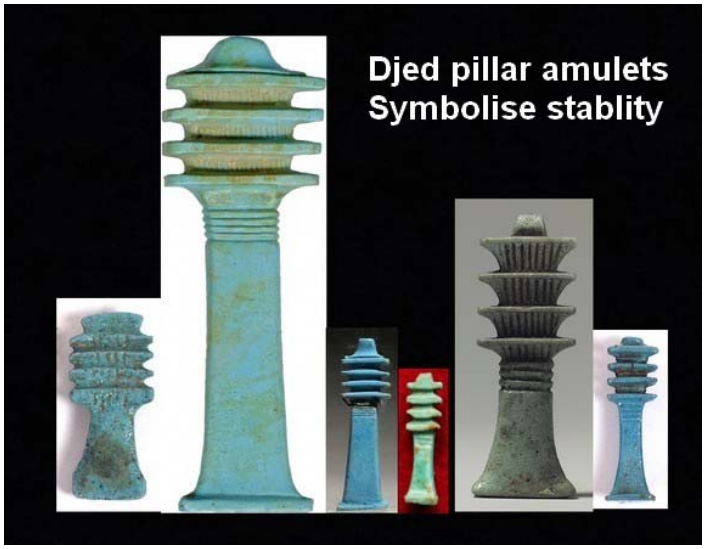
Some Iron Age pottery types in Palestine show other cultural influences. One is Bichrome Ware - probably produced under Phoenician influence. In this group are mostly jugs with spherical bodies and high necks (sometimes with strainer spouts as well), lentoid flasks and bowls. Well done red and black circles are the most common form of decoration. As before, imported pottery, mainly Cypriot and Cyprio-Mycaenean, is found alongside the local products

Roman period

There is no Roman equivalent to the vase-painting of Ancient Greece, and few terracotta vessels of outstanding and high aesthetic interest have survived. There is a great deal of fairly fine tableware, and very small figurines often incorporated into oil lamps and other objects. These often have religious or, alternatively, erotic themes. "Fine" rather than really luxury pottery is the best description of Roman pottery, unlike Roman glass, which the wealthy used alongside gold and silver tableware, and which glass could be extremely extravagant, very fine and very expensive. The more expensive tableware pottery had relief decoration, usually moulded, and often clearly copied shapes and decoration from the more expensive metal vessels.

In the Eastern Empire, local aesthetics continued, mixing with Roman styles to some extent. From the 3rd century onwards the quality of fine pottery declines, perhaps because glassware was replacing pottery for drinking beakers.

Appendix : more pictures


Djed pillar amulets
Symbolise stablity