



## Greek Amphora

An *amphora* (plural: *amphorae*) means 'to carry on both sides' and is a type of vase-shaped container with two handles and a long narrow neck. *Amphorae* were used in Ancient Greece for carrying and storing solids and liquids.

Besides undecorated, coarse clay *amphorae* which were used for storage and transport, high-quality painted *amphorae* like this one were produced in Ancient Greece in large numbers for a variety of social and ceremonial uses. Their design is very different from the simpler more practical versions; they have a wide mouth and a ring base with a glazed surface which is decorated with figures or geometric shapes.

These highly decorated *amphorae* were often used as prizes (as this one would have been). Some examples bearing the inscription "I am one of the prizes from Athens", have survived from the *Panathenaic Festivals* which were held between the 6th century BC and 2nd century BC.

The *Panathenaic Festival* was Athens' most important festival and one of the grandest in the entire Greek world. Except for slaves, all inhabitants of the city and suburbs could take part. The *Panathenaia* was one of those occasions when women could get out of the house and take an active role in a public function.

The festival was believed to be a celebration of *Athena's* birthday and this particular *amphora* shows a picture of her in battle head-dress, holding a spear. At her feet is the famous Athens Owl.

In Greek religion and mythology, *Athena* is the goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, civilization, law and justice, just warfare, mathematics, strength, strategy, the arts, crafts, and skill. *Athena* is also the patron and protector of Athens.

Painted *amphorae* were also used for funerary purposes. Huge vases were also used as grave markers, while some *amphorae* were used as containers for the ashes of the dead. By the Roman period the practical, coarse amphorae were normally the only type produced.

