

An Artifact Speaks • Artifact Information Sheet

Artifact Name: Kylix

Time Period/Date of the Original: 460 BCE

Culture/Religion Group: Ancient Greek

Material: Clay and pigment

Reproduction? Yes



Background Information:

A *kylix* is a shallow, stemmed wine cup, usually with two symmetrically placed, horizontal handles. The flat area on the inside of the cup, called the *tondo*, was often painted with an elaborate scene. This kylix shows a man (or Dionysus, the god of wine and partying), resting on a couch as a musician plays the flute. The man holds a bowl in his hand. This style of painting often represents a *symposium* or men's drinking party. Characteristic of these events were agreeable conversation, music, dancing, and games. Symposia could also be a time for philosophical discussion.

Ancient upper class Greeks (men only) and Romans (men and women) would enjoy their meals while reclining on a couch. In front of the couches would be low tables with food and drink replenished by slaves. Though difficult to drink from if sitting upright, the kylix was perfect for a reclining feaster.

This kylix has been painted in the red-figure style, which was popular beginning around 530 BCE. Red-figure painting means that the figures are red on a black background, with details of the figures finely painted in black. This style of painting followed the black-figure style in which black figures were painted on a red background. Through signatures and painting styles, many ancient pottery artists have been identified. In this time period, the potters and painters were usually different people.

Sources:

- "Ask Smithsonian: Why Did Ancient Greeks and Romans Lie Down to Eat?" Smithsonian.com. Smithsonian Institution. Web. 3 June 2015.
- Department of Greek and Roman Art. "Athenian Vase Painting: Black- and Red-Figure Techniques." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000.
- "Kylix". Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2015. Web. 03 June 2015.
- "Symposium". Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2015. Web. 03 June 2015.