



Myrtle in Greek Art from the Archaic Period to the End of the Classical Period

"Analytical Descriptive Study"

By

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Abstract:

The myrtle plant is considered an essential part of Greek culture in the classical era, and it is one of the most important plants that received the attention of ancient civilizations in general and the Greeks in particular, as it was widely used in the decorations of Greek art. It was associated with worship and religious rituals, and was a symbol of the goddess Aphrodite. It was also associated with the Gods Dionysius, and Persephone. It is a symbol of revival of life, and it was used in Greek art a lot. Besides its decorative form, it had important religious connotations, as it was used as a wreath on the heads of athletes or victors on the battlefields. The plant of myrtle was mentioned by many Greek poets, Virgil mentions in Aeneid, that Augustus surrounded his temples with myrtle, Greek artists continued to use of myrtle as an important decorative element throughout the Greek era, and it was painted in Greek arts, either singly decorating the entire body of the masterpiece, or used as an auxiliary decorative element.

Keywords: Myrtle, Aphrodite, Utensils, Rituals.



Introduction:

Myrtle "μύρτος, μυρρίνη" is an aromatic, evergreen tree that spreads throughout the Mediterranean Sea and the entire Middle East region, and may grow naturally in the wild, or may be cultivated by humans¹. Theophrastus tells us² that myrtle plants used to grow in warm atmosphere.

The myrtle plant was used for several purposes due to its aromatic smell, evergreen leaves, in addition to its branches that bear flowers in white to pink colors, It also has black fruits that are eaten at maturity and dried to form spices and were also used in folk medicine. Pliny mentions that women used it to cleanse the smell of the mouth, so they chewed the seeds of the myrtle plant in the morning³, The Myrtle seeds were stored for use in medicinal purposes⁴. (Figure: 1)

The myrtle plant was associated with ancient cultures and civilizations where it was used for the first time, in the Sumerian civilization⁵. The plant was associated with many sublime virtues and supernatural powers, such as immortality, and the myrtle tree was represented in ancient Iran as a tree of immortality⁶.

As for Greek civilization, myrtle was associated with fertility and beauty, the myrtle plant was one of the most important shrubs planted near Greek temples, and it was especially

¹ Özkan, A. M. and Ç. Güray: A Mediterranean: *Myrtus communis* L (Myrtle), in plants and culture: seeds of the cultural heritage of Europe. Edipuglia, Bari. -(www.edipuglia.it),2009,p 161.

² Theophrastus τρωταμος(371 BC.M. - 287 BC.M.) He was the first to try to classify plants, based on their forms and methods of growth. For more, see:

Sir Arthur F. Hort, Theophrastus: Enquiry into Plants Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols. 1916

³ The Encyclopedia of Natural History (Naturalis Historia) by the Roman historian Pliny the great, which he published between the years 77-79 A.D is considered one of the largest encyclopedic works that has survived from the time of the Roman Empire to modern times. The work was divided into 37 books, arranged in ten volumes. The Encyclopedia of Natural History deals with the following topics: astronomy, mathematics, geography, description of human races, anthropology, human physiology, zoology, botany, agriculture, horticulture, pharmacology, mining, metallurgy, sculpture, photography, and gem carving. C. Plinii Secundi: Naturalis historiae libri xxxvii. ex ed. G. Brotier cum, Oxford University, London, 1826, p746.

⁴ Amos Dafni: Myrtle (*Myrtus communis*) as a Ritual Plant in the Holy Land— a Comparative Study in Relation to Ancient Traditions, Department of Environmental and Evolutionary Biology and Institute of Evolution, New York Botanical Garden Press, Bronx, 2016, p222.

⁵ The myrtle plant was mentioned for the first time, in the Epic of Gilgamesh, so it was used with many other aromatic plants, among the offerings made to the God Gilgamesh, to please him, see: Puckle, B.S: Funeral customs, their origin and development. Werner Laurie, London. 1926, p167. Ferber, M. A: Dictionary of Literary Symbols. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p133.

⁶ Haug, M., West, E. W. and. Evans, E.P: Essays on the sacred language, writings and religion of the Parsis, Vol.1. Trübner, Ludgate Hill, 1884, p104.



associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries"Ελευσίνια Μυστήρια"⁷, where the myrtle plant was a symbol of the return of Persephone to the Earth, again because it is an evergreen plant, it appeared next to wheat on sculptures, and pottery.

Its fragrant branches were also used in the manufacture of statues, the first mention of the use of myrtle branches in the manufacture of statues was when Pelops⁸ dedicated statue made of myrtle wood a Myrtle statue to Aphrodite⁹.

The oil extracted from myrtle leaves has also been used as a deodorant and antiseptic, in addition to being used to treat respiratory diseases due to its medicinal properties¹⁰.

The evergreen myrtle plant, widespread in Greece, was the favorite plant for making wreaths, it was associated with the god Dionysus, the "God of Wine", where the followers of Dionysus wore wreaths in celebrations while drinking wine. The myrtle was an anesthetic and deodorizer of liquor, wearing a wreath was considered an element of worship, celebrating a certain deity, as the myrtle plant was associated with the goddess Aphrodite¹¹ It is narrated that Aphrodite when she got up from the sea, "she was born from the White sea foams" she hid her naked body with myrtle plants¹².

⁷ One of the most important and famous secret religious rituals in ancient Greece, based on an ancient agricultural cult, these derive rituals from the myth of the abduction of Persephone from her mother Demeter to the underworld, the main theme of this myth is the ascension of (ννοδος) Persephone and reunion with her mother.

According to legend, during her return journey, Demeter traveled long distances and went through many small adventures along the way. In one she taught the secrets of cultivation for Triptolemus, to finally come back to me to bloom again every spring, for more see :

Jan N. Bremmer: Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World, Münchner Zentrum für Antike Welten (MZAW), Munich, Germany ,Band 1, 2014.

Maxwell-Stuart, P. G: Myrtle and the Eleusinian Mysteries. Wiener Studien 6 ,1972,pp 145–161.

⁸ It means "dark-eyed" or black-faced, a character in Greek mythology, (Πέλοψ) who was the king of Pisa in the Peloponnese. The name of Pelops is associated with his love for Hippodamia, the daughter of Einomaus, Prince of Pisa in Elis, and to win her, he had to defeat her father in a chariot race, and if he lost, he had to die, but he won by bribing the driver of her father's chariot to unscrew the nail of the chariot rope, and Pelops was honored more than several times, and Hercules built a temple for him. see also:-

https://www.wikiwand.com/ar/%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B9%D8%A9_%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%A7#/%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B.

⁹ Baumann, H: Greek wild flowers and plant lore in ancient Greece. Translated and augmented by W. T. Stearn and E. Ruth. – London, 1993, p124

¹⁰ Baumann, H: Greek wild flowers and plant lore in ancient Greece. Translated and augmented by W. T. Stearn and E. Ruth, London, 1993, p45.

¹¹ Butler.S& Purves, A., Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses, Routledge, 2014, 66.



Thus, this study provides models of drawings of the myrtle plant on pottery, in addition to models of garlands to show the importance of the myrtle plant, highlight its symbolism, its association with many gods, and its most important uses. The researcher will classify the models of the myrtle plant in Greek art, with an analysis of these images in response to the questions posed by the research, namely

- What is the religious significance of the myrtle plant?
- Who of the Gods was associated with the myrtle plant?
- What are the artistic models portraying the myrtle plant in Greek art?
- What is the symbolism of the myrtle plant and its uses

In the following some art models will be shown in which the myrtle plant appeared as follows:

First: the myrtle in the scenes related to gods:-

The order of the photos has been changed from the oldest to the newest, please arrange them in the catalog.

A pottery Amphora preserved in the British Museum, dated to 450-400 B.C.

(image.1)Where we see a scene of the goddess Aphrodite sitting in transparent loose clothes, putting a crown on her head. The god Ares, the winged god of love, seems to be flying up, and behind her stands a girl dressed in tight clothes that accentuate the details of the body, holding in both hands a myrtle plant. The background was decorated with a myrtle plant, either vertically upright or in the form of a wreath, and a circular flower appeared between its branches¹³.

A pottery vase, preserved at the museum Altes, Berlin. It dates from 420 to 410 B.C., found in Sicily: -(image.2)

The belly of the vase is decorated with a mythical scene depicting the god Apollo on Griffin, holding in his hand a branch of the myrtle plant, while Artemis seems to be standing, and Leto¹⁴ is sitting, while two adjacent branches of myrtle sprout from the floor

Heba Farouk Al-Nahas: the councils of the drink (symbosion) in Greek art from the Archaean to the end of the classical "descriptive analytical study" yearbook of the General Union of Arab Archaeologists, No. 24, 2021, P.112.

¹² Christian ,Eichberger:Trees and Shrubs on Classical Greek Vases,University of Salzburg, Bocconeia , 2007,p123.

¹³ Rutherford, A., McAllister, H. A. & Mill, R. R. 1993: New ivies from the Mediterranean area and Macaronesia. – Plantsman ,p 115.

¹⁴(Leto) is the goddess of darkness in Greek mythology, as a result of her pregnancy from Zeus, his wife Hera punished her by preventing her from enjoying the necessary comforts during pregnancy, as she released a huge snake named Python, and cursed her so that she could not give birth in a place where the



of the scene. The artist has excelled in executing the branches of the myrtle in an almost Matrix way that's almost close to the real one, while the god Hermes stood, wearing sandals made of magic myrtle branches¹⁵.

A pottery Amphora, preserved in the Museum Civico, dates to 410 BC. Preserved under No. 1460: - photo (3)

The exterior of the Amphora is decorated with a scene depicting the marriage of Hippodamia and Peplus¹⁶, which corresponds to the legend Veneri Hippodamia was dressed in baggy clothes and riding the horse-drawn chariot of the god Poseidon, on the seashore as evidenced by the waves under the chariot, her hair was decorated with a wreath of Myrtle, while the goddess Aphrodite stands, and around her myrtle plants, which the artist highlighted, by making their long fruits cut off, often ignoring the opposite leaf arrangement.

Second:-: Myrtle plant in scenes related to Greek mythology:-

The dish is decorated with the scene of Cassandra's imminent death, she is about to be slaughtered by Clytemnestra with an ax, and the myrtle plant was used here as an auxiliary decorative element, it looks like a background, for the scene. it is known that the myrtle was also a symbol of the underworld, and the myrtle was associated with funerals¹⁷, it spread at the end of the fourth century B.C. myrtle, mint, and rosemary have been burned since ancient times in funeral rituals¹⁸.

A pottery Amphora preserved in the British Museum, dated to 400 B.C. (images 11-12)

The scene portrayed on the amphora shows the Greek hero Achilles stabbing Penthesilea, as he plunged his spear into her chest to pierce her throat and blood came out. On the other side of the amphora, Dionysus, the God of wine, is shown with his son Oenopion. As for

sun shines. Therefore, Zeus transferred her to the underwater island of Delos, which is not covered by the sun's rays, thus breaking the restrictions imposed by Hera, see: Nikolai Petrovich Obnorsky: *Лето Blockhouse and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary. Volume XVIIa, 1896.*

https://web.archive.org/web/20171012043716/https://www.greekmythology.com/pictures/Myths/Figures/153305/titan_letho/

¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, D.G, Sophocles' Aias Lokros, in *A.H. Sommerstein* (ed.), *Shards from Kolonos: Studies in Sophoclean Fragments*, Bari 2003, p, 243.

¹⁶ Pelops fell in love with Hippodamia, the daughter of Oenomaus, Prince of Pisa in Elis, and to win her, he had to defeat her father in a chariot race, and if he lost, he had to die, but he won by bribing the driver of the chariot of Oenomaus (or that Hippodamia bribed him) to unscrew the nail of the chariot rope, see:-

¹⁷ eldmeier, R : *Einführung in das "De sera numinis vindicta" und Anmerkungen.* – Düsseldorf& Zürich,2003,p178

¹⁸ Baumann, H: *Greek wild flowers and plant lore in ancient Greece.* Translated and augmented by W. T. Stearn and E. Ruth. – London,1993,p76.



the myrtle plant, it appears on Achilles' helmet, so that a branch of the myrtle plant encircles the head as a symbol of victory¹⁹.(19)

A pottery lekythos preserved in the Louvre Museum in Paris dated to 410 B.C., for the painter Tymbos with the number ((CA3758 (image: 14))

The lekythos was found in one of the graves, and its decoration was limited to branches of myrtle plants, only which were painted abstractly and without bearing fruits, as it was painted as a group of branches that looked like a shady tree, where the myrtle plant was **associated** with death and the underworld²⁰.

A pottery amphora preserved in the International Museum in Berlin, dated to 350 BC.M(image .8)The amphora is decorated with a scene, showing the arrival of Paris and Helen in Troy – we see Cassandra sitting in this scene ²¹, this image is the only surviving image of Cassandra wearing an agrion, placing a laurel wreath around her head, holding in her right hand a branch of the myrtle tree, while it fell from her left hand - another branch of the myrtle plant, which refers to the ship bringing Paris and Helen to Troy²².

Second: The analytical study:

First: The myrtle plant and Greek mythology:

It is the sacred plant of the Greek goddess Aphrodite (images 2-3-4-5-10-11) ‘the fragrance of myrtle was also associated with both love and death in the ancient world, where the myrtle tree was originally the tree of death, which Hippolytus held while fleeing from Athens. In the first century B.C., Pliny reported his belief that a traveler with a stick or a myrtle wand would never feel tired or bored on a long journey on his feet²³.(23)

The myrtle plant, according to Greek mythology, was the tranquilizer of nymphs, and it was they who taught the God Aristos, the son of Apollo and Geran, the useful arts of making cheese, building beehives, growing olives, and other sciences²⁴.

¹⁹ Burn, L: The British Museum book of Gre, London, The British Museum Press, 1991,p57.

Williams,D: Greek vases ,London, The British Museum Press, 1999,p84.

²⁰ Baumann, H: Greek wild flowers and plant,p85

²¹ Mazzoldi .S.Cassandra, la vergine e l'indovina. Identità di un personaggio da Omero all'Ellenismo, Pisa-Roma 2001,p68

²²C. Roscino:L'agrenon di Cassandra sul cratere apulo Ginevra HR 44: dall'indumento al personaggio, in F. De Martino (ed.), Abiti da Mito, "Kleos" 15, Bari 2008,p 293.

²³ D.G. Fitzpatrick, Sophocles' Aias Lokros, in A.H. Sommerstein (ed.), Shards from Kolonos: Studies in Sophoclean Fragments, Bari 2003, p243.

²⁴ ELLIS, J.: “Town and Country Houses of Attica in Classical Times”, In: Herman F. Mussche (Hg.):Thorikos and the Laurion in Archaic and Classical Times. Papers and Contributions of the Colloquiumheld in March 1973, State University of Ghent, Ghent, 1975.,p231



The Association of the myrtle plant with the goddess of beauty continued in the Roman era, where the name of the goddess Venus, was associated with the myrtle plant, until it was first named Murcia, a word derived from Myrtea, the God of Myrtle²⁵.

Second: The use of the myrtle plant in funeral rituals:

The Holy Myrtle grew in the groves of Eleusis²⁶, where the foliage was worn by priests as wreaths, and myrtle was also used in funeral rites, since ancient times myrtle, mint, and rosemary were burned in funeral rites. Theophrastus mentions that the Greeks, in the late fourth century B.C., on the fourth and seventh days of each month, they bought myrtle branches to crown their household gods. Therefore, the artist used the myrtle plant in the decoration of his subjects, which contained events from the underworld, such as the portrayal of Hippodamia and Clytemnestra, (images 3-8-9), and also used the myrtle in the decoration of subjects related to fighting on the battlefields²⁷. (27) (Images 11-12-13)

Third: The use of the myrtle plant as a wreath:

The myrtle plant was used as a wreath surrounding the heads of the Greeks. Wreaths made of plants such as laurel, ivy and myrtle were given to athletes, soldiers, and Kings (images 10-13-14). Many preferred to wear wreaths of myrtle, and these were Horace's favorite wreaths, so he often encircled his forehead with a simple wreath of myrtle, which he preferred to the more elegant wreaths of Persian roses²⁸.

Greeks wore wreaths made from real myrtle leaves at weddings and banquets, received as sporting awards and military victories, and crowns were worn as to demonstrate royal status (images 3-5-6-7), and on drink councils. Wreath ingredients varied according to occasion, and their content varied. The wreath often contained violet, myrtle, celery, dill, and lotus²⁹. The myrtle wreath was also used at marriage ceremonies, where the couple wore crowns to express a new beginning in life. The myrtle wreaths were also used to be

²⁵ Brain, Carla: "Venus in Pompeian Domestic Space: Decoration and Context". Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal ,2016,p51

²⁶ The Eleusinian Mysteries was one of the most famous secret religious rites in ancient Greece. Its basis was an ancient agricultural cult (rite of entry or accession) performed every year in the cult of Demeter and Persephone in Eleusis in ancient Greece. See:

Greene, William C: "The Return of Persephone". Classical Philology. University of Chicago Press 1946. p 105.

²⁷ Feldmeier, R. 2003: Einführung in das "De sera numinis vindicta" und Anmerkungen. – Düsseldorf& Zürich,2003,p137.

²⁸ Green, P. S. & Wickens, G. E.: The Olea europaea complex,1989,P. 287

²⁹ Hehn, V. 1902: Kulturpflanzen und Haustiere in ihrem Übergang aus Asien nach Griechenland und Italien sowie in das übrige Europa. – Berlin.,p 84.



placed on the graves of heroes and deceased, as a symbol of the beginning of a new life after death, and to express the deceased's achievements in life³⁰.

Wreaths were also made of gold and silver, the leaves of which were shaped and braided so that they looked similar to the myrtle plant, they were made specifically and primarily to be buried with the dead as symbols of the victories of life³¹. (images 12-13). Figure (2).

Summary:

The myrtle plant was associated with the Greek civilization and was one of the basic and important things in the Greek traditions, as it was associated with the life of ancient Greek man since the Archaean era as an extension of the classical era, it was a symbol of Demeter and Persephone, it is a symbol of the prosperity of planting and permanent spring, and perhaps derived from its permanent green.

It was also associated with Aphrodite the goddess of beauty and dedicated to her temples. The Greeks used it in their weddings as a symbol of the beginning of a new life and the continuation of the feeling of love, as it was associated with the funeral ritual. The wreaths of myrtle were placed on the graves of the deceased to honor them and in reference to the beginning of a new life after death, it was used less often in flower wreaths worn by rulers and athletes, as it was a symbol of victory for ancient Greece. Considering the Greek arts, we find that the Greek artist was able to highlight the myrtle plant in an approximate way to what is in nature. The artist sometimes photographed it individually, executed its branches that carry leaves and sometimes fruits, as an auxiliary decorative element in the scenes. The decorative ones were associated with the gods, especially Aphrodite, Demeter and Dionysus.

³⁰ Heba Farouk al-Nahhas: the drink councils (symbosion) in Greek art, previous, reference, p. 122.

³¹ McGovern, P. E., Fleming, S. J. & Katz, S. H: The origins and ancient history of wine. In: Katz, S. H. (ed.): Food and nutrition in history and anthropology, Amsterdam. 1996, p42.



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Farouk Al-Nahhas: Symposiums in Greek Art from the Archeology to the End of the Classical "An Analytical Descriptive Study" Yearbook of the General Union of Arab Archaeologists, No. 24, 2021

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- Williams,D: *Greek vases* ,London, The British Museum Press, 1999.



https://www.wikiwand.com/ar/%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B9%D8%A9_%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%A7#/%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311398576_Trees_and_Shrebs_on_Classical_Greek_Vases

http://www.egramma.it/eOS/index.php?id_articolo=3170

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/61986/61986-h/61986-h.htm>

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/greek-art/greek-pottery/a/greek-vase-painting-an-introduction>



Figure (1)

Illustration of myrtle plant parts

<https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/vintage-collection-of-hand-drawn-medical-herbs-vector-13802598>

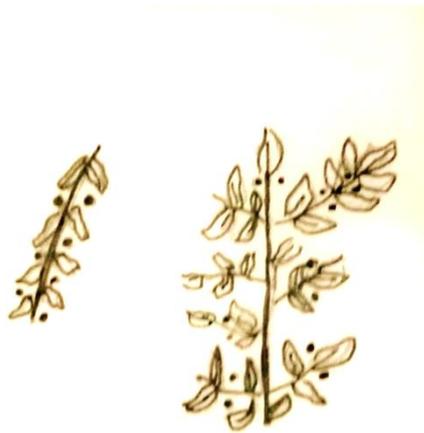


Photo (1a, b)

A–A drawing showing Aphrodite and around her the myrtle plant

B–A drawing showing the myrtle plant made by the researcher

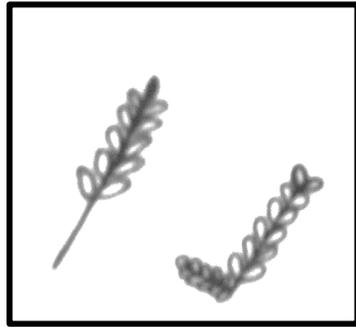


Photo (2A, B)

-A scene representing the goddess Aphrodite, the God of love

B- A drawing showing the myrtle plant made by the researcher.

Fragments of Antiquity: Drawing upon Greek Vases, fig 21. Aaron J. Paul:

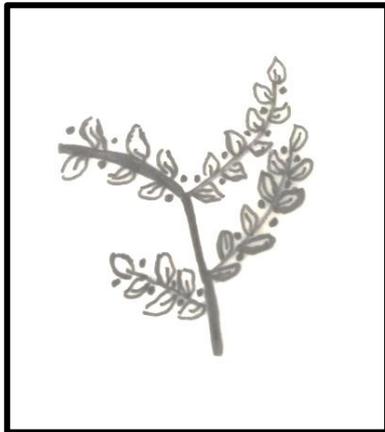


Photo (3A, B)

A-A scene depicting the wedding of Hyudamia and Byblos and the myrtle plant behind Hyudamia.

B-A drawing showing the fruit-bearing myrtle plant made by the researcher

C. Eichberger, M. Sigl & H: RühfelTrees and Shrubs on Classical Greek Vases,fig 6.

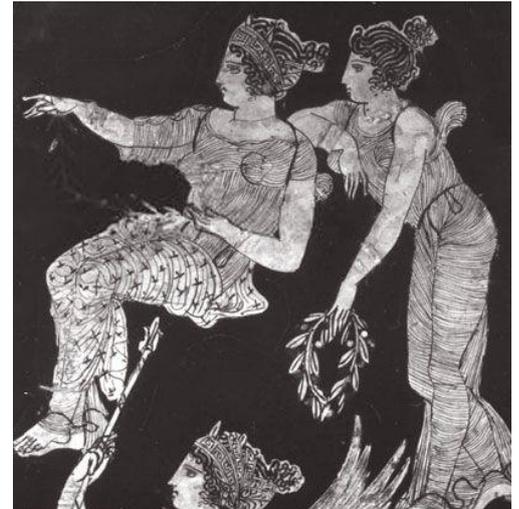
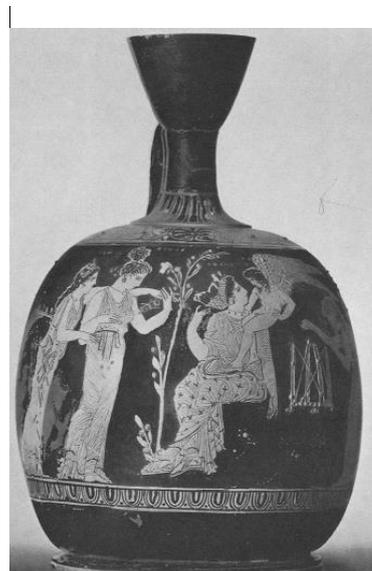
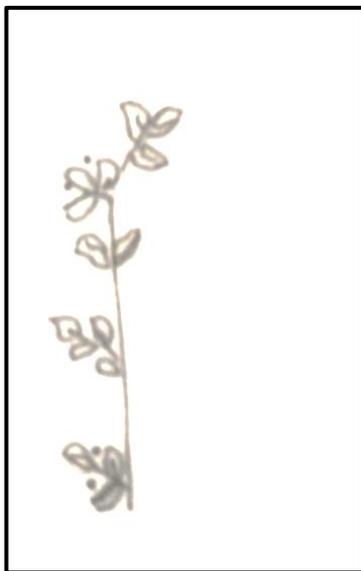


Photo (4A, B)

.A-A drawing showing the goddess Aphrodite and the wreath of myrtle

B-A drawing showing a wreath of myrtle plant made by the researcher

Baumann: Greek wild flowers and plant lore in ancient Greece, fig. 91



(Photo,5 A, B)

A drawing showing the goddesses Aphrodite and the crowns of myrtle-١

B-A drawing showing the myrtle plant made by the researcher

C. Eichberger, M. Sigl & H: RühfelTrees and Shrubs on Classical Greek Vases, fig18.



Photo (6 A, B)

Baumann: Greek wild flowers and plant lore in ancient Greece, fig. 92

A–A legendary scene from Aphrodite's Amphora

B–A drawing showing the goddess Aphrodite and the crowns of the myrtle made by the researcher

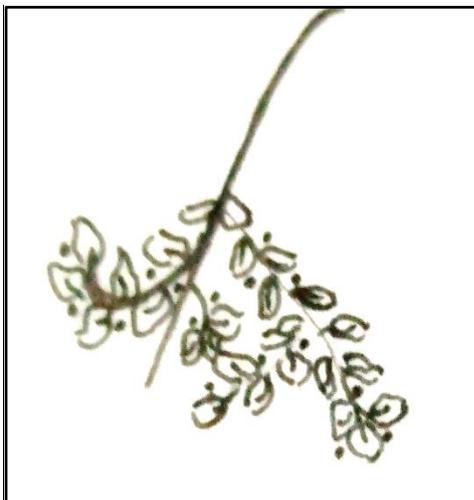


Photo (7A, B)

A–A scene depicting the imminent death of Cassandra and behind her the myrtle plant.

B– A drawing showing a withered myrtle plant made by the researcher

Aaron J. Paul: Fragments of Antiquity: Drawing upon Greek Vases, fig 23



(Photo (8A, B

A–A scene depicting Cassandra holding a myrtle plant in her hands.

B–A drawing showing the fruit-bearing myrtle plant made by the researcher

Aaron J. Paul: Fragments of Antiquity: Drawing upon Greek Vases, fig 24.

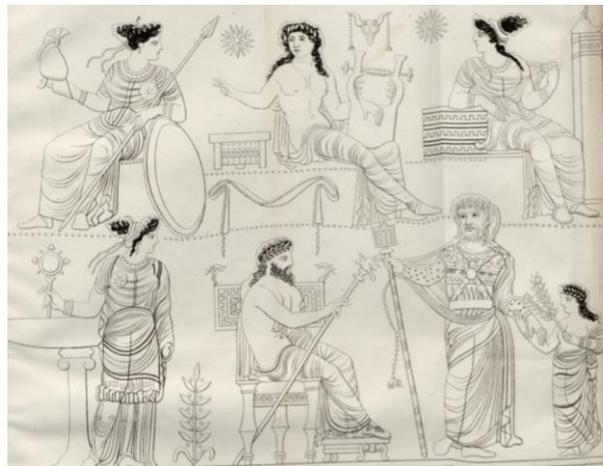


Photo (9)

A detail of the pottery Amphora decorations is dated to 410 B.C.

Aphrodite holding some of the myrtle in the company of Zeus

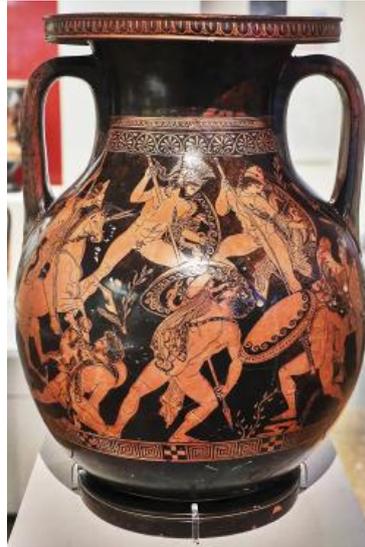
http://www.engramma.it/eOS/resources/images/148/148_lopiparo_22-23.jpg



(Photo.10)

The Greek gods and the detail of the pottery Amphora decorations are dated to 410 BC.M

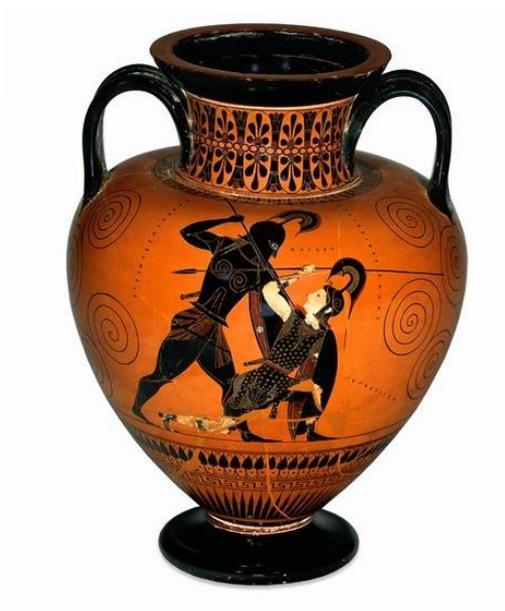
The myrtle plant http://www.engramma.it/eOS/resources/images/148/148_lopiparo_22-23.jpg



(Photo (11

A battlefield and a myrtle plant

Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Inv. 413



(Photo.12)

Achilles stabbing Penthesileia, and the myrtle appears to adorn Achilles ' helmet

Aaron J. Paul: Fragments of Antiquity: Drawing upon Greek Vases,fig34



Photo (13)

Details of the myrtle on a Greek helmet

Aaron J. Paul: Fragments of Antiquity: Drawing upon Greek Vases, fig 35.



(Photo 14)

Lykythos is decorated with a myrtle plant

C. Eichberger, M. Sigl & H: RühfelTrees and Shrubs on Classical Greek Vases,fig5.



(Figure .2)

Golden crown of the myrtle plant, from
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, gift of Miss Annette Finnigan,



(Figure.3)

A marble sculpture depicts Persephone holding wheat and myrtle branches in her hands.

from National Museum Magna Graecia

الأس في الفن اليوناني من العصر القديم إلى نهاية العصر الكلاسيكي "دراسة وصفية تحليلية"

إعداد

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المستخلص:

يعتبر نبات الأس $\mu\acute{\upsilon}\rho\tau\omicron\varsigma, \mu\upsilon\rho\rho\acute{\iota}\nu\eta$ جزءا أساسيا من الثقافة اليونانية في العصر الكلاسيكي، وهو أحد أهم النباتات التي حظت باهتمام الحضارات القديمة عامة واليونانيون بصفة خاصة، حيث استخدم بكثرة في زخارف الفن اليوناني، وارتبط بالعبادات ويطقوس دينية، وكان رمزا للاله افروديت، كما ارتبط بالإله ديونسيوس، وبيريفسون، فهو رمز للحياة من جديد، وقد استخدم في الفن اليوناني بكثرة، إذ انه كان بجانب شكله الزخرفي، كان له دلالات دينية هامة، كما استخدم كإكليل علي رؤوس الرياضيين، أو المنتصرين في ساحات الحرب، كما ذكر نبات الأس العديد من الشعراء اليونانيين، فيذكر فيرجيل في الانبياء، أن أغسطس أحاط معابده بنات الأس، وقد استمر الفنان اليوناني في استخدام نبات الأس، كعنصر زخرفي هام طوال العصر اليوناني، وقد رسم علي الفنون اليونانية أما منفردا فيزخرف كامل بدن التحفة، أو يستخدم كعنصر زخرفي مساعد.

الكلمات الدالة: الأس، افروديت، أواني، طقوس.