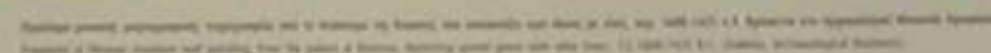
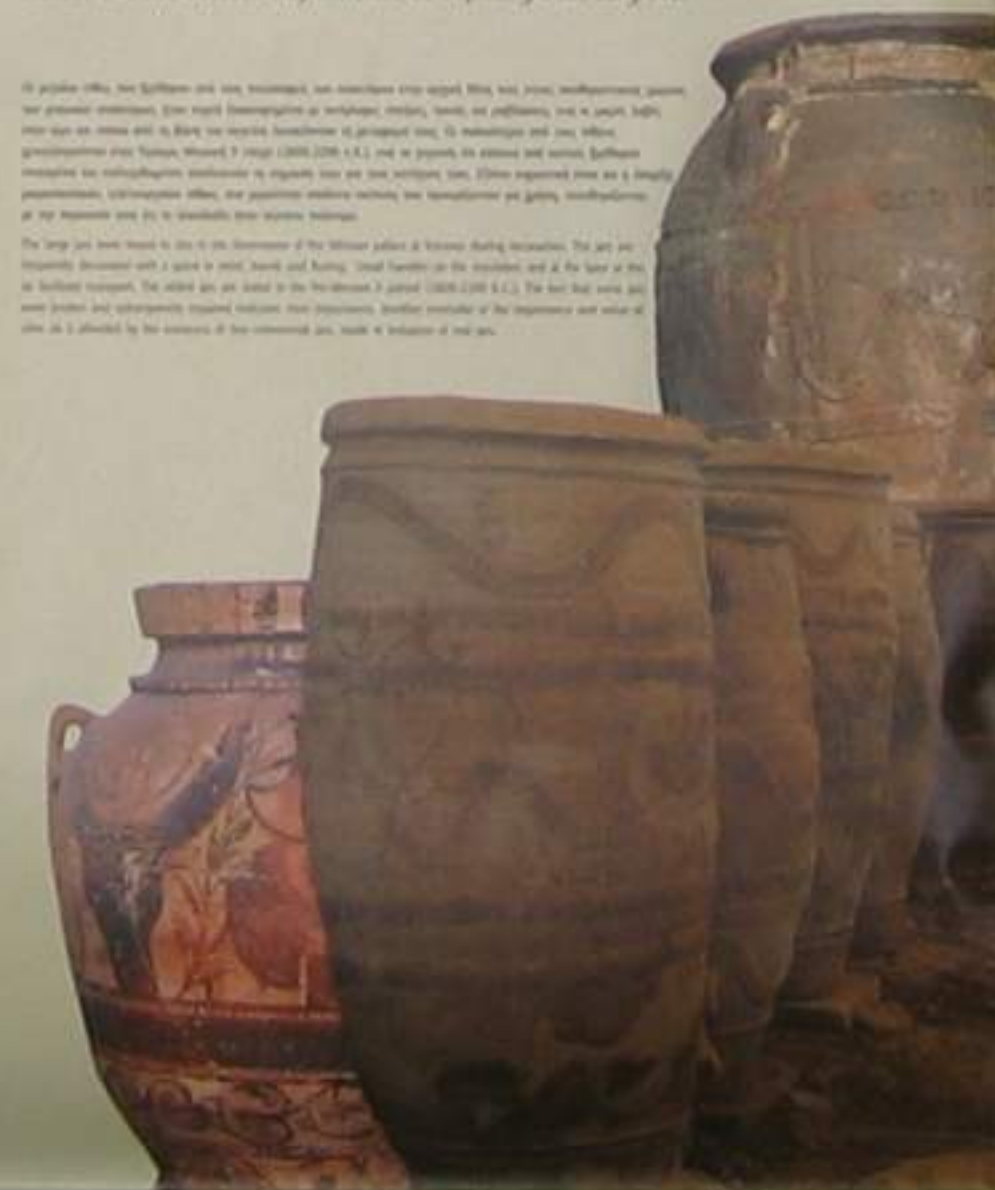
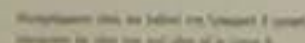
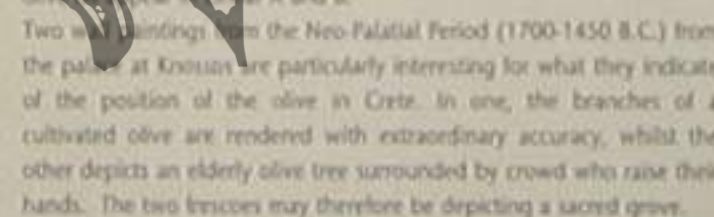


# Ακαδημία Αθηνών

The olive appeared wild in the Mediterranean basin many thousands of years ago. The cultivation of the olive spread along with the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean. Written sources indicate that the olive tree became known first among the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean, in Syria and Asia Minor and that the Greeks and the Phoenicians brought it to the west.

Many finds indicate how widespread the tree was. In several areas of Greece, such as Santorini, Naxos and Crete in Euboea, excavations have turned up fossilized remains of olive (*olea europaea*) leaves dating by the most recent techniques available to about 50,000 to 40,000 years ago, thus making Greece one of the earliest places in which the olive was cultivated. With the help of palaeobotany, radio-carbon dating and other methods of dating olive pollen, a considerable number of areas in which the olive grew have been located around the Mediterranean. Pollen spores have been found in various areas of Greece such as Ispiro, dating to 6000 B.C., eastern mainland Greece, dating to 3255 B.C. and Thessaly, dating to 3200 B.C.

These finds do not, of course, give a full picture of the landscape as it was, but they do reinforce the impression that the olive was part of the daily life of the time. However, the beginning of the cultivation of the olive in Greece coincides with the Early Bronze Age, during the third millennium B.C. and during the following millennium, cultivation of the olive became systematized. Along with the spread of the olive and the use of the olive as a food, methods for the production of olive oil developed. Olive oil was thus widely because one of the main commodities of the ancient world, giving rise to a whole array of related occupations, such as carriers, sailors, traders, pattern and perfumers.

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Olive oil was always a *choice* product and not suitable for export, a trade network, for reaching and flourishing. Developing in the Middle East basin in ancient times by the transport of various products among which was olive oil. Colored in painted amphora, oil travelled in Greek and Phoenician ships along trade routes, stretching from the countries of the Middle East, like today the Lebanon, Syria and Israel, via Cyprus, Crete and Egypt, to reach the western Mediterranean. In earliest times, before coins were introduced, trade was in kind, in exchange for cargoes of equal value.

During the course of the 1st millennium B.C., the Phoenicians and the Greeks founded the first colonies in the western Mediterranean. As the colonies developed, the olive, together with vital knowledge regarding its cultivation, made its way to the west, again through the agency of the Greeks and the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians took the olive to their colonies in Africa and to Sardinia and Spain. The Greeks took it to Italy and France.

Maritime trade routes were not at all safe and cargo ships were frequently attacked by pirates, as pottery from shipwrecks of the period indicates.