

THE GREEKS

AGAMEMNON TO ALEXANDER THE GREAT

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POINT-À-CALLIÈRE, MONTRÉAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY COMPLEX
December 12, 2014 – April 26, 2015

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY, GATINEAU
June 5, 2015 – October 12, 2015

THE FIELD MUSEUM, CHICAGO
November 24, 2015 – April 10, 2016

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MUSEUM, WASHINGTON, DC
May 26, 2015 – October 9, 2016



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND SPORTS

THE MACEDONIANS AND THE BOTTIAEANS

The small kingdoms of the Homeric epics reflect the organization of the tribal kingdoms that shared the Greek territory in the 9th–8th centuries BC. Although relations between them were not always peaceful, these Greek tribes spoke dialects of the same language, believed in the same gods, and were aware of their common tradition and descent. This belief is eloquently depicted in epics and mythical genealogies. In the Archaic period (7th–6th centuries BC), tribal kingdoms with primitive structures still existed in the Greek periphery even though the processes that would lead to the creation of democratic city-states were already underway in some of the larger centres (Athens, Argos, etc.). In northern Greece, tribes like the Lynkestai, the Pelagones, the Orestai, the Elimeiotai, the Eordoi, the Bottiaeans, and the Macedonians occupied most of the territory that was later named after the last.

The *Makednoi* or *Makedonai* (Macedonians), whose name derives from the root *mak-*, which means “high” or “he who comes from the highlands”, were a Dorian tribe (Herodotus I, 56), which had moved from Mount Pindos to Mount Olympus. According to Hesiod (West-Merkelbach *Fr.*3), who lived in approximately 700 BC and expressed the presence of tribal affinities that were well known in his time, the Macedonians were



founded by Makedon, brother of Magnes, the patriarch of the Magnetai, and son of Zeus and Thyia, daughter of Hellen, the mythological progenitor of the Hellenes (Greeks).

The land of the Macedonians lay south of the Thermaic Gulf (modern Imathia and Pieria prefectures), which in those days reached deep into the Macedonian basin. The Aliakmon and Loudias rivers, which then mingled in the same bed (Herodotus VII, 131), separated the land of the Macedonians from the land of the Bottiaeans, which lay north of the gulf (southern part of the Pella prefecture).

According to tradition (Plutarch, *Theseus* 16; Strabo 6.3.2, 7.fr.11, 20; Diodorus of Sicily 12.47), a group of Cretans had been sent in order to serve at the sanctuary of Delphi, but unable to survive there, they fled first to southern Italy. Eventually some reached the Thermaic Gulf and chose to settle there under the name of Bottiaeans,

▲ Mouthpiece, cat. no. 193, detail.

► The river Aliakmon, general view.

after their leader Botton. The names *Botton* and *Bottiaios* (Bottiaean) are connected to the words *boter* and *botes* (or *boutes*), which have the same root as the word *bous* (ox) and designate the “cow herdsman”. And indeed, *Bottiaia* with its large rivers, fertile plain, marshes, and low hills was ideal for raising cattle.

The reference to the Delphic sanctuary and southern Italy identifies the period of Greek colonization (8th–7th centuries BC) as a likely timeframe for these events. Cretans and Rhodians colonized Gela in Sicily during this period, and names such as Axios-Axos and Gortynia-Gortyn among others, occurring in both Bottiaea and Crete, suggest that tradition may indeed contain seeds of historical truth. What is certain, however, is that both the Bottiaeans and the Macedonians were Greek tribes.

Before the end of the 6th century BC, the Macedonians under King Amyntas I (530–496 BC) expanded into Bottiaea. Many Bottiaeans, probably the ruling group, fled to Chalkidiki and settled at Olynthos, which Herodotus calls a “Greek city”. Those who remained in Bottiaea were assimilated. With the establishment of Pella, which quickly became the largest Macedonian city, Bottiaea became the kingdom’s core and, in the years of Alexander the Great, provided the cavalry of the *hetairoi* with an entire squadron (Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri* A, 2.5).

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