

POTS AND PAINTING

INTRODUCTION

1. POTS

Basic 'containers' for Greeks - no plastic, metal expensive, clay cheap. Most for everyday use - bowls, plates, cooking pots - not painted, or painted all over - usually black in early days, red later on.

Only a small number of pots actually painted for luxury or "special" items.

- (a) for storage - olive oil, wine.
- (b) for drinking parties - wine mixed with water - mixing bowl, jug, cups.
- (c) for cosmetic use - oil flasks for athletes, perfume for women, trinket boxes.
- (d) for "special" occasions - prize givings, funeral offerings, monumental urns or tombs.

ie. some might be "mass produced" for a particular market.
some might be special orders for individuals.

They would not on the whole come cheap. They were mainly for ornament rather than use; they survived - sometimes in pieces, but repairable like a jigsaw.

Pots have turned up in sanctuaries, tombs, as offerings, or dumped on rubbish heaps and down wells.

They provide, apart from sculpture, practically the only visual evidence of Greek life and interests.

They are the prime source (a) for everyday life, and artefacts, and interests.
(b) for visual representation of myths - Homer in paint.

They record the development of Greek painting - awareness of perspective and space - it is often possible to "date" pots with remarkable accuracy for those early days.

2. THE EARLY HISTORY OF POTTERY PAINTING

Mycenaean times - formal, abstract painting - frescoes of Cretan palaces
11th - 10th century BC - geometric, precise shapes - concentric circles
9th - 8th century BC - more complicated, wide-spread patterns, bands of animals, silhouette figures.
7th century BC - influence of Near East leads to "orientalising period" - introduction of Heroes, monsters, animals on the prowl, decorative floral patterns instead of the geometric ones.

i.e. more naturalistic painting - "every picture tells a story".