

How the Ancient Greek Pottery Reveals the Classical Greek Society

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Introduction

Greek civilization holds a paramount importance in the history of civilized man. The Greek pottery is one of the most important resource in examining the significance of the Greek civilization as they reveal many important evidences which help to gather the important facts about Greek culture, art and human society. The main objective of this study is to examine the important facts of classical Greek society which depicts in the ancient Greek pottery. Greece is a country in southeastern Europe, known in Greek as Hellas, and consisting of a mainland and an archipelago of islands. Greece is the birthplace of Western philosophy, literature, mathematics, history, drama, scientific method, medicine, physics and engineering, the Olympic Games, and democracy. The Latin alphabet also comes from Greece, having been introduced to the region by the Phoenicians in the 8th century BCE.

Mainland Greece is a large peninsula surrounded on three sides by the Mediterranean Sea (branching into the Ionian Sea in the west and the Aegean Sea in the east) which also comprises the islands known as the Cyclades and the Dodecanese, the Ionian Islands, the isle of Crete, and the southern peninsula known as the Peloponnese. The geography of Greece greatly influenced the culture in that, with few natural resources and surrounded by water, the people eventually took to the sea for their livelihood. Mountains cover eighty percent of Greece and only small rivers run through a rocky landscape which, for the most part, provides little encouragement for agriculture. Consequently, the early Greeks colonized neighboring islands and founded settlements along the coast of Anatolia. The Greeks became skilled seafaring people and traders who, possessing an abundance of raw materials for construction in stone, and great skill, built some of the most impressive structures in antiquity.

Greek Pottery from c. 1000 to c. 400 BCE provides not only some of the most distinctive vase shapes from antiquity but also some of the oldest and most diverse representations of the cultural beliefs and practices of the ancient Greeks. Therefore, an important tool for archaeologists and historians in determining the chronology of ancient Greece. Whatever their artistic and historical value though, the vast majority of Greek vases. The pottery is a valuable archeological resource in exploring the history of the mankind and also it a cultural expression that depicts the hidden facts of a civilization.

Methodology

The study is basically based on secondary data collected from different reliable sources of published books, journals, reports and websites.

Result & Conclusion

On the exterior, Greek vases exhibit painted compositions that often reflect the style of a certain period. For example, the vessels created during the Geometric Period (c. 900-700 B.C.E.) Later, during the Archaic and Classical Periods (c. 600-323 B.C.E.), vase-paintings primarily display human and mythological activities. These figural scenes can vary widely, from daily life events to heroic deeds and Homeric tales, from the world of the gods to theatrical performances and athletic competitions. While it is important to

stress that such painted scenes should not be thought of as photographs that document reality, they can still aid in reconstructing the lives and beliefs of the ancient Greeks.

Around 625-600 B.C.E., Athens adopted the black-figure technique (dark-colored figures on a light background with incised detail). Originating in Corinth almost a century earlier, black-figure uses the silhouette manner in conjunction with added color and incision. Incision involves the removal of slip with a sharp instrument, and perhaps its most masterful application can be found on an amphora by Ezekias. In addition to displaying more realistically defined figures, black-figure painters took care to differentiate gender with color: women were painted with added white, men remained black.

The red-figure technique was invented in Athens around 525-520 BCE and is the inverse of black-figure. Here light-colored figures are set against a dark background. Using added color and a brush to paint in details, red-figure painters watered down or thickened the slip in order to create different effects. When thickened, the slip was used to form so-called "relief lines" or lines raised prominently from the surface, and these were often employed to outline forms. Surprisingly similar to red-figure is the white-ground technique.

The pottery is a valuable archeological resource in exploring the history of the mankind and also it a cultural expression that depicts the hidden facts of a civilization. On the other hand, pottery is considered as an example for the characteristic of the artistic movement in the civilization. Ancient Greeks had given a respectable value to making pottery. Black figure pottery, red figure pottery and white pottery are main types of pottery that we can found from the Greek civilization and they contains remarkable evidence of the contemporary mythical beliefs and cults. These Greek pottery express various social activities and social movements in Greek society such as

- religious worship & games
- slavery & society
- women
- sexuality & human life
- symposiums
- war
- Economy.

We can say that through the study of the ancient Greek pottery we can examine the values and social activities in ancient Greek society which had contributed many things in art, philosophy, medicine, logic and science to the world civilization.

In conclusion, then, we may say that not only has Greek pottery given us some of the most distinctive, influential, and beautiful shapes and designs of antiquity but it has also given us a window into the lives, practices, and beliefs of a people long gone and of whom we very often have no contemporary written record. These everyday objects, unlike those other archaeological survivors' literature, sculpture, and architecture, allow us to feel a little closer to the ordinary people of the ancient world, those who could not afford fine art or precious jewelry but could indulge in possessing a finely made object such as a Greek vase.

Sources

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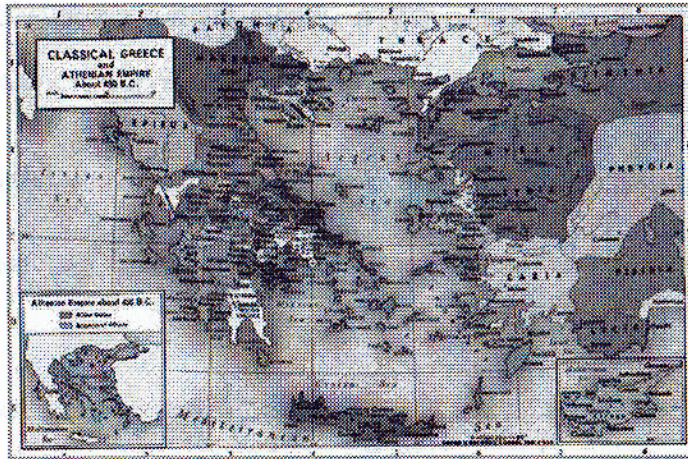


Figure 1: Classical Greece map

Mesolithic Period (8300-7000)
Neolithic Period (7000-3000 BCE)
Aegean Bronze Age or Early Bronze Age (3000-2000)
Minoan Prepalatial (3000-2600 BCE)
Early Cycladic Culture (3200-2000)
Early Helladic Period (3000-2000)
Minoan Prepalatial Period (2600-2000 BCE)
Minoan Prepalatial Period (2600-2000 BCE)
Minoan Protopalatial Period (1900-1700 BCE)
Early Middle Cycladic (2000-1600 BCE)
Middle Helladic Period or Middle Bronze Age (2000-1550)
Minoan Neopalatial Period (1700-1400)
Late Bronze Period or The Heroic Age (1600-1100)
Late Helladic Period (1500-1100)
Minoan Post palatial Period (1400-1100)
Mycenaean Culture (1300-1000)
Sub-Mycenaean Period (1180-1050)
Sub-Minoan Period (1150-950)
Dark Age of Greece (1100-700)
Proto-Geometric Period (1100-900)
Geometric Period (900-700)
Late Geometric (circa 760-700)
Orientalizing Period (circa 740-650)
Archaic Period (700-480)
Classical Period (480-323) Transitional (480-450)
Hellenistic Period (323-146)
Late Hellenistic or Greco-Roman (146-30)

Figure 2 : Time Line