# IV LUXURY ITEMS

The uneven survival of material evidence from Greek antiquity has tended to guide interest and research towards the different forms and functions of sculpture (Chapters II and III) and of vase-painting (Chapters V and VI). They have been preserved in such numbers that, although we have only a fraction of the total output, we can study the ways in which they developed over the centuries against the social, economic, and political background and in the different parts of the Greek world. This has encouraged a tendency towards positivism and has had the unfortunate outcome of considering them as the exclusive elements of Greek art, with a concomitant emphasis on the aspects of restraint, simplicity, and so forth that were highlighted by the Neoclassical attitudes to Greek art that emerged in the eighteenth century.[1] This approach has led scholars to demean the more lavish products that, by the very nature of their intrinsic value, have failed to survive in any numbers – gold, silver, ivory, and the like. Recent excavations, particularly those in cemeteries situated in the outlying areas of the Greek world and in the regions bordering on ancient Greece, have brought to light some of those expensive objects that are now missing from the Greek heartlands. Meanwhile, investigations into the more flamboyant aspects of Greek art have shown that buildings and architectural and freestanding sculpture were lavishly coloured. A nineteenth-century drawing by Donaldson shows coloured glass beads set into a column capital of the Erechtheion (Figure 21).

Despite the low percentage of material evidence preserved and its uneven distribution, a study of texts, inscriptions, and vase-paintings shows how often works in exotic and rich materials were in evidence, for whatever reason – whether for pleasure, show, piety, or for their intrinsic value, which brought prestige to the owners. Many authors found opportunities to make mention of the importance of gold and silver objects, especially in Greek sanctuaries. On a number of occasions Herodotus records the rich gifts that he counts as 'worth seeing' (*axiotheētos*) for their size and splendour, such as cauldrons, tripods, couches, and so forth, that the kings (e.g. Kroisos of Lydia)

[1] Vickers and Gill 1994; Lapatin 2003.

**Figure 21** Capital with glass beads set in plait moulding from the Erechtheion, Athens, late fifth century BC. Drawing by T. L. Donaldson.

and tyrants (e.g. Hieron and Gelon of Sicily) dedicated at Delphi and elsewhere (Hdt. 1.14; 1.25; 1.50–2; 1.92), even mentioning the names of some of the makers. There are also references to the vast spoils that the Greeks won from the Persian Wars (Hdt. 8.121–2 and 9.81–2).[2] Thucydides' account of the Athenian ambassadors at Segesta in 416 BC is well known – the locals duped the astonished visitors into thinking that the citizens all possessed gold and silver cups (*ekpōmata*) in their homes, when they had actually passed round the objects stored in the sanctuaries (6.46, cf. 6.32.1). Pliny in *HN* 33.154 lists the names of craftsmen still known in his day who had worked in silver and gems (e.g. Boethos, Mentor, Mys); naturally he knows no names of those who had fashioned pottery, nor does he name goldsmiths.[3]

A useful source of information that has recently been made clearer comes from the inscriptions that list temple treasures, such as those of the fifth and fourth centuries in the Parthenon and Erechtheion on the Athenian Acropolis and the later lists relating to the Apollo sanctuary on Delos.[4] They detail the paraphernalia that was housed in the sanctuaries – the plate used in the glittering religious processions and the sumptuous offerings (such as gems, jewellery, precious vessels, furniture, and fine textiles) that had been dedicated by the state and private individuals. None of this material has survived but we can gain some idea of its appearance by comparing it with costly objects found

[2] M. C. Miller 1997: ch. 2.

[3] See Pollitt 1990, for a selection of quotes. See now Arafat 2009 for Pausanias' references to treasure.

[4] Inscriptions: Harris 1995; Hamilton 2000.

in other contexts. The lists underline the way in which rich votives expressed the prosperity of a community. In addition, vase-paintings are helpful in showing the elaboration that was sometimes aimed at with the addition of colours and gilding, and the fancy clothing and gold jewellery worn by figures in the images (Figures 28 and 47); the inlaid furniture in some vase scenes indicates the extravagance achieved with wood (see below). As Lapatin has well said in relation to pottery, 'The Greeks did not live in an exclusively red, black, or white world'.[5]

## Jewellery and gemstones

The British Museum exhibition of Greek gold jewellery held in 1994[6] was a reminder that, of all the skills in gold and silver, the craft of jewellery-making was of the very highest quality, with superb and delicate workmanship that went to fashioning personal ornaments for the rich, whether living or dead.[7] The chief metal used was gold, as it not only defies decay and tarnishing but is easier to work than silver; it was also ten times more valuable. The techniques, which scientific investigation has made clearer, involved a whole range of processes: casting in moulds, hammering into thin sheets, twisting into fine wire, and adding granules of gold; later, gems were inserted, though the gold was usually allowed to make its effect on its own. Jewellery, mainly worn by women, was chiefly concentrated on the head and neck, with necklaces, earrings, diadems, and hair-spirals, and on the arms and hands, with bracelets, rings, and pins; attachments were also sewn on cloth or leather. Some objects such as the large pins (*fibulae*) carried incised patterns and figures on the catch plates; earrings were formed into 3D designs that included natural plants (fruit, flowers, acorns, etc.), animals and monsters (lions, bulls, bees, sirens, tritons), and figures in human form (Eros, Ganymede [Figure 22], Nereids, Athena). The jewellery carved on Archaic statues and painted on Athenian pottery assists in enlarging the picture.

Greek craftsmen learned their craft from the Near Eastern goldsmiths who probably moved into the Greek areas (the islands, the coast of Asia Minor, the mainland) and taught the locals. Major

[5] Lapatin 2003: 82.
[6] Williams and Ogden 1994.
[7] See Higgins 1980; Despini 2006.

**Figure 22** A pair of gold earrings with Ganymede and the eagle, *c.*330–300 BC. Height 6 cm.

sites that have yielded up gold jewellery from the early centuries of the first millennium BC are the cemeteries of Levkandi (Euboea) and the Athenian Kerameikos, and the sanctuaries on Crete: gold discs, necklaces, and pendants, together with diadems and strips of wafer-thin sheet metal no more than a millimetre thick, run into moulds or hammered on matrices, with repeated figures of horsemen, athletes, dancers, animals, and more.[8] In the following centuries, the burial of jewellery with the dead lessened in Greece but continued in outlying areas: witness, for example, the important finds from the cemetery at Sindos in Macedonia.[9]

Jewellery, being the goal of rich collectors down the ages and purchased solely for its beauty and its craftsmanship, is usually bought with no consideration of context, but the regional centres of manufacture are beginning to be sorted, and a start has been made on identifying specific jewellers and their families.[10]

The engraving of gemstones was a craft, like jewellery, that the Greeks learned from further east, some gems being far more precious than the metals into which they were set.[11] The major centres of production were located in the Cycladic islands and East Greece. A wide variety of natural stones (e.g. agate, chalcedony, carnelian, jasper, onyx) were formed into oval shapes (with and [later] without scarab backs); wheel or bow, drill, and emery powder were used to engrave

[8] Lefkandi: Popham et al. 1979: 217–25; Coldstream 2003: 123–6, 373–6; Crete: Hoffman 1997. See also Boardman 1999a.
[9] Vokotopoulou et al. 1985.
[10] Musti et al. 1992 on sites and regions; Williams 1998 on craftsmen.
[11] Richter 1968; Boardman 2001a.

the miniature intaglio devices. The gems served as seals on chests and boxes in which important goods were stored, on official documents and private letters, on contracts and wills. They were also worn as magic talismans, as love charms, or medicinal amulets. Some gems were inserted into finger-rings; some were pierced for suspension. Other gems such as garnets, amethysts, and lapis lazuli were fixed into gold surrounds and worn as jewellery – bracelets, necklaces, and earrings. They were highly rated in antiquity and, given the small size of the area to be carved (just a few centimetres across), the quality of the craftsmanship is outstanding. The names of some craftsmen are known, either because they signed their work (e.g. Epimenes in the sixth and Dexamenos in the fifth century, Figure 23) or because their names were handed down in texts (e.g. Theodoros [Hdt. 3.41] who had made the gemmed ring for Polycrates, tyrant of Samos; and Pyrgoteles [Plin. *HN* 37.8] who was engraver for Alexander the Great). The images engraved included animals and birds, and human, divine, and heroic figures, and the style of the engraved figures followed the general development of the other arts.

Their small size means that gems have always been collectible, and over the centuries cabinets of such items were popular features in antiquarian circles. Recent research has shown a marked revival in their study as a subject in their own right and in the history of collecting.[12]

**Figure 23** Mistress and maid on a chalcedony scaraboid, signed by Dexamenos, *c.*450–425 BC. Dimensions 22 mm × 17 mm.

[12] E.g. Henig 1994 on the Fitzwilliam collection, which contains gems from collections previously privately owned; Boardman et al. 2009 on the Marlborough gems.

## Gold, silver, and bronze

When gold and silver plate are unearthed from excavations, international exhibitions are quickly mounted, attracting the general public as well as students of archaeology and art history, and sumptuous catalogues with glittering colour photographs accompany the exhibitions. Detailed excavation reports follow at a more leisurely pace.

In contrast to the finds from the Mycenaean burials, little gold and silver plate of the Archaic and Classical periods has been excavated in Greece; the 'noble metals' were kept in circulation, the smaller cups and jugs in rich families for private activities, the larger vessels for religious processions and festivals or as ostentatious offerings in sanctuaries, with a consequence that over the centuries the objects were looted or recycled. Texts (historical and literary) and inscriptions help to enlarge our understanding of the place the precious metals

**Figure 24** Gold *phialē* found at Olympia, *c.*625–600 BC. Height 15 cm; diameter 15 cm.

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had in society.[13] A rare example from Greece is the gold bowl (*phialē*) that was found by chance in the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia (Figure 24). The inscription reads 'The sons of Kypselos dedicated [this bowl] from Heraclea', so it was a votive offering made presumably after the death of their father in 625 BC. The bowl makes its effect on its own; gold is rarely covered by other metals.

The sources of gold in Greece are few; there were gold mines on the island of Siphnos, and on Mount Pangaion at the southern edge of Macedonia; but much more important was Lydia in Asia Minor, which was an important area in the development of gold refining, early coins, and jewellery.[14] Some of these areas were also sources of silver, but the most famous mining area for silver was Laurion in Attica, on account of the major strike made in the early fifth century and its effect on the Greek success in the Persian Wars.

There are many more silver vessels extant than gold, ranging from the usual spread of shapes concerned with drink and libations (cups of various shapes, jugs, mixing bowls, strainers, and ladles) to those connected with perfume and oils. More rarely preserved are objects such as caskets, sceptres, and coverings for furniture, along with ceremonial offensive weapons and defensive armour. Because of their similarity to red-figure vases, much attention has been given to the silver vessels (cups [e.g. Figure 25], *kantharoi*, *phialai*) that carry gold-leaf figures on them. Barely a dozen in number, they all date from the second half of the fifth century and have been found in the north-eastern fringes of Greek contact. The scenes are closely allied to Athenian work in style and subject (seated Nike, *apobates* race, Bellerophon and the Chimaera, satyr and maenad); the choice for place of manufacture lies between Athens, from which the pieces would have been exported, or the north-east, to which the craftsmen had emigrated.[15] More flamboyant are the cups and bowls that carry relief figures.

Absence of gold and silver plate from Greek sites is compensated by finds in outlying areas, mainly in the north and north-east, which were in contact with Greece, where it was a common practice to bury gold and silver and other precious objects alongside the dead, and it is the unlooted tombs in those areas that provide the bulk of the

[13] Strong 1966; Vickers and Gill 1994. On the diffusion of Greek artistic ideas, see Boardman 1994.

[14] Ramage and Craddock 2000.

[15] Williams 1996: 231–41.

**Figure 25** Silver cup with gold Nikē in the *tondo*, found in the Taman peninsula, south Russia, *c.*470 BC. Height 6.7 cm; diameter with handles 16 cm.

evidence. Rich tombs have been known in some of these areas since the nineteenth century, but the increased excavation of other tombs that have furnished rich contents and the willingness of excavators to share their findings have brought them to closer attention.

The sites in Macedonia and Thrace vary geographically. The southern areas, such as the late sixth-century cemetery at Sindos, contained objects with a Thracian bias (gold face sheets, hands, feet, mouthpieces) alongside pectorals, plaques, and roundels,[16] and the late fourth-century tombs at Vergina displayed their royal associations: for example, gold caskets, greaves, pectoral, and a conglomeration of silver vessels.[17] Further north the cemetery sites in Bulgaria such as Rogozen, Panagyurishte, Kazanlak, and Duvanli are well known from the exhibitions that have travelled the world.[18] From the seventh century, Greek colonies were established north of the Black Sea and their prosperity is shown by the contents of their tombs.[19] As we saw, some of the finds are so close to Greek (mainly Attic) shapes (e.g.

[16] Vokotopoulou et al. 1985.
[17] Andronikos 1984. For Late Classical and Hellenistic Macedonian silver, see Zimi 2010.
[18] Thrace: Archibald 1998: 318–35 (with a catalogue of metal vessels); Marazov 1998.
[19] Reeder 1999; Trofimova 2007.

Figure 25), that they were probably imported from Athens; there are also Scythian shapes, including weapons such as combs and quivers (*gōrytoi*) that match the one found in 'Philip's tomb' at Vergina. Sometimes the subjects are undeniably Greek; others show local Scythian customs. Further east lies Colchis (Georgia), the metal rich region of the Caucasus, where the famed river Phasis was the site of the story of the golden fleece, and where recent excavations have unearthed gold objects.[20]

Though outshone by the two noble metals, the cheaper bronze also had its luxurious side. The crafts are cognate, and it is likely that the same men worked in the different materials. Apart from the making of small bronzes, cast solid, to place in tombs, to present as prizes at games, or to dedicate in sanctuaries, and life-size hollow figures that became the hallmark of Classical sculpture (see Chapter II), the bronze foundries decorated many of the more practical objects they produced. One major line was defensive armour: the Archaic shields were adorned inside with metal strips that carried repoussé mythological episodes; there was also decoration on breastplates, helmets, body protectors, and greaves.[21] Of the shapes of vessels that they shared with the other metals and with clay, the most extravagant were the volute-kraters. The late sixth-century volute-krater, a prestige export item found in a woman's tomb at Vix in the south of France, with a frieze of soldiers and chariots decorating the neck, and the smaller fourth-century gilded bronze volute-krater found in a tomb at Derveni in Macedonia, with an altogether more elaborate decorative repoussé relief with a Dionysiac theme on the body, stand comparison with the gold and silver vessels for the high quality of their workmanship, if not for their intrinsic value.[22]

## Ivory

Pliny (*HN* 37.204) considered that ivory was the most expensive organic material, and it was acclaimed for its smooth texture, creamy colour, and durability. As it was traded from a distance, it was highly regarded as an exotic and precious substance.[23] It could be unscrolled,

[20] Braund 2005; Kacharava et al. 2008.
[21] Kunze 1950 and Bol 1989. See also Hoffmann 1972.
[22] Vix: Rolley 2003; Derveni: Barr-Sharrar 2008.
[23] Fitton 1992; cf. Krzyszkowska 1990.

**Figure 26** Ivory statuette of a youth found in the Heraion, Samos, *c.*625 BC. Height 14.5 cm.

softened, and worked by sawing, bending, turning, and polishing, and it was enhanced by incising, relief carving, and staining with red, green, and blue.[24] The Greeks learned to work ivory from contact with the Near East, through both the import of goods and the immigration of foreign workers; there were some major workshops centred on Lakonia.[25] The fragments that survive show how useful it was both for itself and in combination with other materials. There are examples of ivory in doors, veneer for furniture inlays and appliqués, and embellishments for mirror handles, shields, horse harness, chariots,

[24] Lapatin 2001.
[25] Marangou 1969.

musical instruments, and so forth (for its combination with gold, see below). There is a range of fragmentary sculptured statuettes from the eighth to the sixth century, consisting of humans (the five *korai* from the Athenian Kerameikos), monsters (the Perachora sphinx), legendary figures (daughters of Proitos?), and animals (man and lion from Delphi).[26] The Samos youth of *c.*600 BC (Figure 26) inlaid with amber may be part of a lyre; others were inlaid with stone and glass. Most early ivories were excavated from sanctuaries (e.g. Sparta, Corinth, Perachora, Argos); later there is a good spread from the tombs in the north and north-east: for example, from 'Philip's tomb' with ivory heads, reliefs for a couch, and a ceremonial shield composed of gold and ivory; and from the Prince's tomb.[27] Also noteworthy is the cache of Archaic ivories found in a ditch under the paving of the Sacred Way at Delphi,[28] and the ivory plaques incised and coloured with the Judgement of Paris from a tumulus of the Seven Brothers at Kul Oba of *c.*400 BC.[29]

## Chryselephantine statues[30]

We noted previously (see Chapter II) that some of the earliest marble Greek statues were considerably larger than life size. In this way, the dedicators demonstrated their piety to their gods and their wealth to their neighbours. Another major way of showing righteousness and riches simultaneously was by the ostentatious use of costly materials on a statue. Classical authors mention a number of early chryselephantine statues without indicating their size, the first being the seated Aphrodite at Sikyon by Kanachos (Plin. *HN* 36.47). Fragments of life-size and smaller chryselephantine statues of the mid-sixth century were excavated from under the Sacred Way at Delphi (particularly, the trio of Apollo, Artemis, and Leto),[31] but these fragments are literally outshone by the evidence for the two colossal chryselephantine images that one associates chiefly with Pheidias – ivory for the skin, gold for the clothing, with the addition of precious stones.

[26] Boardman 1978: figs. 19, 38, 39, and 52.
[27] Andronikos 1984: 123–36 and 206–8.
[28] Carter 1989; École Française d'Athènes 1991a: ch. 4.
[29] St. Peterburg K-O 116: Boardman 1993: no. 138; Cohen 2006: 325, fig. 7.
[30] Lapatin 2001 with select catalogue, 138–51, and select terminology, 152–92; 2003; 2005.
[31] Delphi: Carter 1989; École Française d'Athènes 1991a: 206–19; Lapatin 2001: 57–60 and cat. no. 33.

The earlier was the standing Athena Parthenos, dedicated in 438 BC and fashioned to stand in the Parthenon to a height of 11.5 metres (40 feet).[32] Lapatin's detailed work on this and other similar statues now gives us a clearer picture of their technique, appearance, and meaning. He stresses that precious metals honoured divinity; the more sumptuous the offering, the more piety the dedicators were showing and the greater the return they expected. In addition, this was a politically ostentatious and flamboyant way for a state to store its gold reserves. Though not one scintilla of the Athena Parthenos remains, it was copied in various forms and sizes in antiquity, and so many details of it are known (especially from Paus. 1.24.5–7) that close approximations to its appearance in the round have been made in modern times (at small scale in Toronto and at full size in Nashville, Tennessee).[33] It was a majestic and glistening incarnation of the goddess, shown more clearly in a wider room than normal, with a Doric colonnade round three sides and with windows on either side of the main doorway to improve the light. A terracotta token, the size of a small coin, found in a context of the early fourth century BC in the Athenian Agora (Figure 27), shows how fresh finds, no matter how small, can refine our understanding.[34] This token shows us that, when the statue was originally erected, there was no pillar

**Figure 27** Clay token of the Athena Parthenos, found in the Agora, Athens, *c.*400 BC. Diameter 2.5 cm.

[32] Athena Parthenos: Boardman 1985/1991: 110, figs. 97–106; Pollitt 1990: 56–8; Ridgway 1992: 131–5, and 2005; Harrison 1996: 38–52; Rolley 1999: 58–66; Lapatin 2001: 63–79, and 2005: 261–79; Hurwit 1999: 187–8, and 2004: 146–50; Nick 2002; Palagia 2006a: 122–6; Barringer 2008: 191–4; Davison 2009: 69–272.

[33] Toronto: Leipen 1971; Nashville: Lapatin 2001.

[34] Camp 1996: 241–2 and pls. 70, 20; Lapatin 2001: 86–8.

under the right hand of Athena that the later copies show – as had been surmised, the goddess had no need of a support for the winged Victory she was holding. The token also shows that the snake that was later coiled behind the shield on Athena's left (Paus. 1.24.7 and later copies), was originally on the right side of the statue. Much attention has recently been given to the images on the shield and the sandals, and the precise significance of the subject of Pandora on the base still causes particular controversy – was she intended as a benign or a malign presence?[35]

It is difficult to resist the notion that, as Athens had a monumental gold and ivory statue, then Olympia felt in honour bound to follow suit. So Pheidias was invited to Olympia to create a second – and bigger – statue. The seated Zeus at Olympia (Paus. 5.11.1–11), 12 metres tall, was altogether the more impressive statue, displaying the power and majesty of the god in rich and bright array but squeezed into the narrower and darker space of a temple that was already built.[36] Pausanias' description shows that it was much more elaborate than the Parthenos in the use of metal, precious stones, and ebony, a host of figured scenes, the throne and footstool decorated with painted figures and mythological scenes in relief. Zeus had a sceptre at his left and a gilded statue of Victory on his right hand. Numbered as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, it has been recreated on paper in various versions, though there are no ancient copies to match those of the Parthenos. Help in adding visual images to Pausanias' detailed description has been afforded by excerpts from the story of the Niobids that decorated the throne, to be seen on a late fifth-century Attic bell-krater from Baksy (south Russia), painted only a generation after the statue was erected.[37] Later adaptations in marble, coins, and gems also provide a little help. The finds in a workshop at Olympia, unearthed not far from the temple (converted in later antiquity into a Christian church), have furnished evidence of materials needed for a chryselephantine statue – fragments of ivory, coloured glass, metal, and moulds – which suggest that the statue was made there in sections and

[35] Nīkē: Harrison 1982: 53–65. Base with Pandora: Hurwit 1999: 235–45, and 2004: 151–3; Palagia 2000; Boardman 2001c; Kosmopoulou 2002: 112–17, cat. no. 59; N. Robertson 2004; Lapatin 2005.

[36] Zeus at Olympia: Pollitt 1990: 58–62; Harrison 1996: 59–64; Rolley 1999: 127–31; Palagia 2000 (on the base); Lapatin 2001: 79–85; Kosmopoulou 2002: 117–21, cat. no. 60 (on the base); Barringer 2008: 53–4; Davison 2009: 319–404.

[37] Shefton 1982 and 1992: 247 and n. 46.

moved for assembly to the temple.[38] Lucian, writing seven centuries after the construction of the Zeus, presents his wry view of the fate of the statue and highlights the effect the statue must have had on all visitors over the centuries:

> Visitors to the temple no longer think that they are looking at ivory from India or gold mined from Thrace but at the son of Kronos and Rhea in person, settled on earth by Pheidias and told to keep watch over the deserted region of Pisa, contented if someone sacrifices to him in four whole years as a sideline to the Olympic Games.
>
> (*On Sacrifices* 11)

The pools of water in front of the Athena Parthenos and of oil in front of the Zeus were to preserve and also to reflect the statues.

Other chryselephantine statues were set up later: a seated Hera by Polykleitos in the Argive Heraion (Paus. 2.17.4–5), a statue of Dionysos by Alkamenes in the sanctuary of Dionysos Eleuthereus in Athens (Paus. 1.20.3) and a seated Asklepios by Thrasymedes in his temple at Epidauros, said to be half the size of the Olympian Zeus (Paus. 2.27.2). The first chryselephantine statues created for non-divine figures were those of Philip and Alexander by Leochares, erected in the Philippeion at Olympia in the early 330s BC (Paus. 5.17.4). Such colossal chryselephantine figures were rare later; Pausanias mentions the Zeus in Hadrian's Olympieion in Athens for its size (1.18.6), as well as a second-century-AD complex group of Poseidon and Amphitrite at the Isthmus of Corinth, set up by Herodes Atticus (Paus. 2.1.7–8).

## Textiles

Spinning and weaving, carried out with the skill given by Athena, were necessary domestic accomplishments and everyday occupations for the women of the household. Homeric women, whether Penelope, Helen, Calypso, or Circe, typify the home industries, whether making clothing, bed covers, or chair seats for the home or more elaborate fabrics for the gods and the dead. Miller, noting the amazing wealth of textiles that were abandoned by the Persians in 479 BC after Plataia and the strange outcome, comments 'The wild card in the archaeological pack, textiles remain tantalising.' Pausanias, the Spartan commander,

[38] For accounts of Pheidias' workshop at Olympia, see Mallwitz and Schiering 1964 and Schiering 1991, where the glass and some other materials are now thought not to relate to the Zeus statue (130–56).

ordered the helots to gather all the spoils together. They did so, hid some and sold them to the Aiginetans 'but they paid no attention to the embroidered clothing [*esthēs poikilē*]' (Hdt. 9.80).[39]

Utilitarian clothing, mainly wool or linen, worn by Greek men and women, was simple, consisting mainly of a rectangular cloth with little need of tailoring.[40] Few actual pieces survive, but as usual we may turn to written texts, treasury lists, and the many representations in sculpture and vase-painting to assist us in understanding the spinning of the wool, the weaving of the cloth, and the way in which the finished items were worn. Besides plain clothing, there are descriptions and illustrations of elaborately decorated dresses and blankets with bright patterns woven horizontally or vertically in the material, and even with figured scenes that include animals, birds, humans, and mythical creatures. It is suggested that the patterns that decorated Geometric and other early painted pottery show the influence of contemporary textiles, particularly the rectangular meanders that point to the way in which running spirals were adapted by work on the loom. Archaic *korai* and Attic black- and red-figured scenes provide the best examples (e.g. the Peplos *kore*, and others, and the processions of deities at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis painted by Sophilos [Figure 28] and


**Figure 28** Hebe and Dionysos on an Attic black-figure *lebēs* signed by the painter Sophilos, *c.*580 BC. Height of frieze 7 cm.

[39] M. C. Miller 1997: 55 (quote) and 75–81.

[40] For general studies, see Barber 1991: ch. 16 and 1992; Vickers 1999; Ferrari 2002b: chs. 1 and 2. For Greek dress, see Llewellyn-Jones 2002.

Kleitias).[41] Textiles, of course, served many other purposes besides clothing for the living and the dead. Wool and linen were woven to make patterned coverlets, funerary cloths, wall hangings, curtains, tents, rugs, and carpets. The last may have given inspiration for mosaic flooring.

As for actual remains of textiles, we are woefully lacking. Once again tombs come to our aid. The gold casket in the antechamber of 'Philip's tomb' at Vergina contained two pieces of purple woollen shroud, the gold thread patterned with florals, birds, and waves.[42] Grave 6 (*c.*400 BC) in the Seven Brothers tumuli in the Taman peninsula also preserved a woollen cloth, on which friezes of painted figures such as warriors, chariots, and deities, on a dark ground, alternating with florals, have names in Greek by them, e.g. Iokast[e], Phaid[r]e, Eulimene.[43] There are also small fragments of a Chinese silk shroud from the Athenian Kerameikos cemetery. They date from the late fifth century, were found in a bronze cauldron (*lebēs*) in the large family tomb of the family of Alkibiades, and may have contained the ashes of the man himself.[44] A fragment of linen, said to have been found at Koropi (Attica), has gold thread with a pattern of Achaemenid lions.[45]

The best-known textiles are the two *peploi* woven for and presented to Athena, goddess of crafts, at the Panathenaia. The textual evidence for these two missing tapestries is complex and has only recently been disentangled.[46] Instead of the one *peplos* that was thought to be the subject of the different descriptions, it is now clear that there were two. Young girls, aged between seven and eleven, were annually employed together with the priestesses on the smaller and more prestigious *peplos*. They began their work in the autumn, at the time of the Chalkeia festival, and spent nine months until the Panathenaia the following midsummer, when the newly finished *peplos* was hung on the old wooden statue of Athena in the Erechtheion. The saffron cloth, of standard size, carried scenes of the Battle of the Gods and the Giants woven into it – an annual celebration of the victory of the Olympians and of Athena's particular role in it. The subject of the battle is popular in vase-painting, and some versions may adapt scenes

[41] Bundrick 2008.
[42] Andronikos 1984: 191–2.
[43] Gerziger 1975.
[44] Knigge 1976: 83, 86 ff. and 1991: 107–9; M. C. Miller 1997: 77–9.
[45] M. C. Miller 1997: 80–1 and fig. 27 (Victoria and Albert Museum, London).
[46] Barber 1992.

from the cloth, and it is likely that this is the cloth that is being folded on the east frieze of the Parthenon.

The other *peplos*, which may have become an item in the Panathenaic festival later, perhaps only after the Persian Wars, was also saffron but was much larger. Men competed to weave it for the Greater Panathenaia, which was celebrated every four years in more lavish splendour than the annual festival. This cloth was erected as a sail for a processional trireme and also carried scenes from the same stupendous battle.

## Wood

As with textiles, wood (box, yew, maple, cedar, cypress, etc.) was a basic element in Greek life – buildings and furniture, chests and boxes, plates and bowls, carts and coffins – but there were occasions when it moved into the realm of luxury items and was made precious by treatment.[47] The furniture could be elaborated by painting and by the addition of more exotic materials such as gold, silver, and ivory. This is seen not only on vase-paintings and terracotta relief plaques but by the preservation of these materials in graves where the wood itself has decayed.[48] An outstanding example of actual remains is the fragmentary ornate couch of the mid-sixth century BC, adorned with ivory and amber appliqués, in a shaft grave below South Hill in the Athenian Kerameikos.[49]

Wood for sculptured figures is one of the main lacunae in the evidence of material culture. We read of venerated *xoana* and of sculptors such as Endoios, Kanachos, and Myron, who worked in wood as well as in stone; this may have been more common than the written evidence suggests. We also read that the first Olympian victor statue carved in wood was set up in 544 BC. The Hera sanctuary on Samos provides us with a cross section of what remains from the mid-seventh century BC onwards – statuettes of deities and humans, usually carved in one piece but some with separate pieces inserted.

[47] For general works on wood, see Meiggs 1982. For furniture, see Richter 1966, and now Adrianou 2009.

[48] For a detailed study of one vase and the painter's understanding of carpentry, see Simpson 2002. For images of carpenters at work, see Hadjidimitriou 2005: ch. 5.

[49] Knigge 1976: 60–83 and pls. 101–11, and 1991: 101–2.

The object that has recently re-ignited scholarly interest is the 'chest of Kypselos'.[50] The lengthy and detailed description of this object that Pausanias saw in the Heraion at Olympia (Paus. 5.17.5–19.10) has always engaged attention, but with the recent increase in the appreciation of Pausanias as a dependable witness the chest has become a subject of lively discussion. The object was made of cedar wood and was decorated with rows of figured scenes carved in the wood or added in gold and ivory. What was the shape of the chest? Was it round or rectangular? It was given various names over the centuries – *kypselē* ('corn bin' – hence the nickname for Kypselos, who was said to have been hidden in a corn bin by his mother [Hdt. 5.92]) suggests a round shape; *kibōtos* (Dio Chrys. *Troikos* 11.45, 'box') and *larnax* (Paus 5.17.5–7, 'chest', where the author tries mistakenly to persuade his readers that the word *kypselē* was used for *larnax* in early Corinth) are both more likely to have been rectangular. The object Pausanias saw and described is usually taken to be rectangular, but Splitter shows how his description might fit a round shape. Pausanias managed to read the Archaic Corinthian boustrophedon lettering (left to right and right to left on alternate lines) that was carved in the background of the scenes, and he listed the scenes in such a detailed and precise way that they have been closely compared with the scenes on Corinthian vase-painting of the second quarter of the sixth century. This being so, the date for the chest is too late for Kypselos himself, and Carter has suggested that the dedication was made by his son Periander, that he dedicated another at Delphi, and that it is this latter that is preserved among the group of ivory reliefs found there.[51]

## A note on skeuomorphism[52]

Before we turn in the next chapter to consider the subject of pottery, a brief note on skeuomorphism may be pertinent. The practice of adapting the shape and/or decoration of one medium into another ('skeuomorphism') was common. Potters and painters produced shapes that derive from other media – they copied wooden boxes (*pyxides*), basketwork containers (*kalathoi*), horns (*rhyta*), leather goods (*askoi*), stone (*alabastra*), and so forth. But the closest borrowing was

[50] Carter 1989; Splitter 2000; Snodgrass 2001; Giuman 2005.
[51] Carter 1989.
[52] Vickers 1998.

between metal and clay. The precise nature of this borrowing and the consequences that follow from it have been the source of intense debate over a number of years, though recently the fire seems to have died down.[53]

The amount of Greek pottery, both decorated and plain, that is now extant is vastly greater than the remains of metalwork, so direct comparisons are uneven. The hierarchy of value gold–silver–bronze leaves clay a very poor relation and, where shapes and/or decoration are similar, it has been assumed that the direction of influence mainly flows from the more expensive and prestigious materials to the cheaper. This influence can be seen in three ways: shape, decoration, and colour.

Metal vessels such as large bowls (*lebētes*) and libation dishes (*phialai*) are prime examples of shapes that are more fitting for gold, silver, or bronze than for clay. In addition, there are details on many clay vases that declare their origin in metal: studs and rivets, handle attachments, engraving, ribbing, and stamping – these are not native to pottery. There are, however, many shapes in clay that give us no reason for thinking that their origin lies in metal. The idea that the potters were manipulated by the metalworkers is hard to accept when one reviews the development of the pottery industry from the Geometric centuries onwards.

As for figured and patterned decoration, the theory that was advanced that Attic black-figure and red-figure were cheap copies of work in precious metals and that vase-painters used designs that had originally been created for metalwork (bronze or gold background and silver figures for black-figure, and gold figures on a silver background for red-figure) has generally been rejected. Even given the unbalanced proportions of extant metal and clay objects, the extremely small number of metal vases that carry incised figured scenes suggests that the practice of adding figures was not widespread (see above). The presence of preliminary sketches on the clay surface, the use in red-figure of different strength of paint lines (flush, relief, and dilute), and the addition of gold leaf to some figures argue against the theory. With the extension of the black-figure technique (and to a lesser extent red-figure) to a large variety of centres, if metal was an influence, we would have to assume either that the designs from metalwork

[53] See Vickers and Gill 1994 and various articles earlier and later. For replies, see Williams 1995: 158–9; 1996: 231–41 and 227, n. 2; Pritchard 1999; Neer 2002: 206–15. See also Shanks 1996: 59–65.

were handed round to different centres or that there was widespread borrowing from imported Attic pottery. That the elite would use only silver or gold vessels is gainsaid by the presence of pottery in tombs alongside precious metal objects and suggests that the wealthy families handled pottery as well as metal. When we turn to the subject matter of Attic pottery, elite scenes such as symposia, hunting, athletics, and pederasty were popular, and this has been quoted as another indication that they were initially directed towards the wealthier citizens and so had originally been designed for silverware. It has been pointed out that the lower orders are likely to have been fascinated by scenes of a life they could not share and that there are humbler scenes such as those with cooks, fishermen, and oil-sellers that argue a wide range of clientele for pottery. The suggestion that when there are 'signatures' on the pottery *egraphsen* means 'designed' and *epoiēsen* 'executed' and refers to the making of the metal original has also not been accepted as a viable explanation.

There has been debate on the subject of the colour of silver and its connection with the black gloss on pottery. The discussions centre on the treatment of the surface of silver. As metal was assessed for its weight, constant polishing would reduce the value; thus silver blackened over time and it is the black of silver that the potters were copying. This interpretation of the evidence has been challenged by appeal through literary references to silver-footed Thetis (Hom. *Il.* 1.538) and the silver moon (Sappho 34), and to bronze statues where silver is inserted to represent teeth.

It is certainly more reasonable to speak of influence than of imitation.