

Pottery of Native American Puebloan Indians

Pottery was produced by a method called coiling and scraping. A clay "snake" is coiled around in a spiral, forming the base to a vessel (a bowl, for instance). Additional "snakes" or coils are added on, creating the basic shape of the vessel. Then the coils are scraped together, erasing all signs of the individual coils. The ancestral Pueblos probably used shaped pieces of wood or gourds as "scrapers" to do this work. Smooth stones were used to "polish" the surfaces of bowls.

Ancestral Pueblo pottery is called Black-on-White. The white is from the color of the clay. The black paint used for the designs was made from boiled plants (like



This looks like an unusual example of Mesa Verde Black-on-white.

beeweed or tansy mustard) or from crushed rock with iron in it (such as hematite). Paint brushes were made from the fibers of the yucca plant.

Today you can see many examples of our own culture's use of designs. For instance, most of our clothing has some design, pattern, logo, or motto on them. These elements may be important to the wearer or may not mean anything at all. This also

holds true for decorations on our tools, dishes, houses, cars, etc. The ancient Pueblo people were no different. They too used designs in their daily life. These designs may have had specific meaning to them or may have just been decoration. Unfortunately, we can't ask them where they got the inspiration for their designs. Modern day Pueblo people have helped archaeologists in explaining some ancient images. Because of their ties with the ancient Pueblo people, modern Pueblo people can give unique interpretations to past designs.