

Chinese Pottery

China has one of the world's oldest continuous civilizations—despite **invasions** and **occasional** foreign rule. A country as vast as China with so long-lasting a civilization has a complex social and visual history, within which **pottery** and **porcelain** play a major role.

The function and status of **ceramics** in China varied from dynasty to dynasty, so they may be **utilitarian**, **burial**, trade-collectors', or even **ritual** objects, according to their quality and the era in which they were made. The ceramics fall into three broad types—earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain—for **vessels**, architectural items such as roof **tiles**, and modeled objects and figures. In addition, there was an important group of **sculptures** made for religious use, the majority of which were produced in earthenware.

The earliest ceramics were fired to earthenware temperatures, but as early as the fifteenth century B.C., high-temperature stonewares were being made with **glazed** surfaces. During the Six Dynasties period (AD 265-589), **kilns** in north China were producing high-fired ceramics of good quality. Whitewares produced in Hebei and Henan provinces from the seventh to the tenth centuries evolved into the highly prized porcelains of the Song dynasty (AD. 960-1279), long regarded as one of the high points in the history of China's ceramic industry. The tradition of religious sculpture extends over most historical periods but is less clearly delineated than that of stonewares or porcelains, for it embraces the old custom of earthenware burial ceramics with later religious images and architectural ornament. Ceramic products also include lead-glazed tomb models of the Han dynasty, three-color lead-glazed vessels and figures of the Tang dynasty, and Ming three-color temple ornaments, in which the motifs were outlined in a raised trail of slip—as well as the many burial ceramics produced in imitation of vessels made in materials of higher intrinsic value.

Trade between the West and the settled and **prosperous** Chinese dynasties introduced new forms and different technologies. One of the most far-reaching examples is the impact of the fine ninth-century AD. Chinese porcelain **wares** imported into the Arab world. So admired were these pieces that they encouraged the development of earthenware made in imitation of porcelain and **instigated** research into the method of their **manufacture**. From the Middle East the Chinese acquired a blue **pigment**—a purified form of **cobalt oxide** unobtainable at that time in China—that contained only a low level of **manganese**. Cobalt **ores** found in China have a high manganese content, which produces a more muted blue-gray color. In the seventeenth century, the trading activities of the **Dutch East India Company** resulted in **vast** quantities of decorated Chinese porcelain being brought to Europe, which **stimulated** and influenced the work of a wide variety of wares, notably **Delft**. The Chinese themselves adapted many specific vessel forms from the West, such as bottles with long **spouts**, and designed a range of decorative patterns especially for the European market.

Just as painted designs on Greek pots may seem today to be purely decorative, whereas in fact they were carefully and precisely worked out so that at the time, their meaning was clear, so it is with Chinese pots. To twentieth-century eyes, Chinese pottery may appear merely decorative, yet to the Chinese the form of each object and its adornment had meaning and significance. The dragon

批注 [KZ1]: 陶器

Pottery is the ceramic material which makes up potterywares

批注 [KZ2]: 瓷器

Porcelain is a ceramic material made by heating materials

批注 [KZ3]: 陶瓷，陶器和瓷器

批注 [KZ4]: pottery, or a particular kind of pottery [xxx]ware

批注 [KZ5]: Trail&Trail

批注 [KZ6]: Ceramic slip is used by potters to add decoration to their pots

批注 [KZ7]: 钴

批注 [KZ8]: 锰

批注 [KZ9]: 荷兰人有 delftware

批注 [KZ10]: Differ with squat

represented the emperor, and the phoenix, the empress; the pomegranate indicated fertility, and a pair of fish, happiness; mandarin ducks stood for wedded bliss; the pine tree, peach, and crane are emblems of long life; and fish leaping from waves indicated success in the civil service examinations. Only when European decorative themes were introduced did these meanings become obscured or even lost.

From early times pots were used in both religious and secular contexts. The imperial court commissioned work and in the Yuan dynasty (A.D. 1279-1368) an imperial ceramic factory was established at Jingdezhen. Pots played an important part in some religious ceremonies. Long and often lyrical descriptions of the different types of ware exist that assist in classifying pots, although these sometimes confuse an already large and complicated picture.

批注 [KZ11]: 石榴

批注 [KZ12]: 石榴象征 “多子多福”

批注 [KZ13]: 鸳鸯

批注 [KZ14]: 松树

批注 [KZ15]: 鹤（长脖子）

批注 [KZ16]: 鲤鱼跃龙门