I'm not a bot

Just like the culture and history of China itself, the story of Chinese ceramics, the most famous of all oriental pottery, is a richly fascinating tale that dates back millennia. Often the two are intertwined, in that the history of a nation can be learned by the pottery unearthed by archaeologists and analysed, interpreted and decoded by anthropologists.For thousands of years, Asian porcelain and especially Chinese pottery has beguiled all those who see it and appreciate it for its intricacy, detail, artwork and quite extraordinary technical expertise. Perhaps most importantly for its deference and connection to Chinese culture, history and philosophy.Chinese pottery – as with most artforms – varies dramatically. The variations are according to dynastic style and preference, available materials, technology & skills of the age and for whom it was made. These reasons, amongst many others, are why Chinese ceramics and all types of oriental pottery are so highly prized by discerning collectors all over the world.The phrases 'Chinese pottery' and 'Chinese ceramics' cover a very wide range of products. From bricks and tiles used for construction to the first crude, handmade vessels all the way up to the magnificent blue and white vases of the Ming dynasty and the stunning Asian porcelain made for both the imperial court and the huge export market.There's no other place in the world where pottery assumes such importance as in China and the influence of Chinese pottery and Chinese ceramics on European pottery has been profoundly important.The Different Types of Chinese PotteryThere are many different types of Chinese pottery and each type can be further categorised by factors including age, geographical location, kiln firing temperature and geological makeup.In terms of a broad timeline, earthenware, a porous material fired at low temperatures usually below 1200°C is generally recognised as the earliest form of Chinese pottery and was developed in Neolithic times. Stoneware, a non-porous material fired at around 1300°C requires a specific type of clay and was developed after earthenware and porcelain, fired at temperatures up to 1400°C came later, around 2,000 years ago.Porcelain is the dominant and most prestigious type of antique Chinese pottery and is sought after for its delicacy, strength and variety of colour.Geographically and geologically speaking, Chinese pottery can be divided into two overarching categories – northern and southern – and the differences are fascinating. China is in fact made up of two land masses, each of which is geologically different to the other and they came together millions of years ago by the continental drift. The two land masses formed a junction that sits between the Yellow and Yangtze rivers (known as the Nanshan-Qinling divide) and the contrasting geology means that Chinese ceramics from the north can differ quite dramatically from Chinese pottery from the south.The north lacks petunse, the stone needed for high quality porcelain so it became the centre for earthenware. The south has high concentrations of silica, potassium oxide and low alumina (the reverse of the north) which made it suitable for high quality porcelain.In addition, northern kilns predominantly used coal whereas southern kilns used different types of wood.It's also worth noting that Chinese ceramics can be further categorised as guanyao, Asian porcelain made in the imperial kilns for the royal court, and minyao, commercially-made Chinese pottery made for the people.Chinese Pottery Marks – What Are They and How To Read ThemWhen discussing Chinese pottery, one of the most interesting topics is that of the Chinese pottery marks. Known as 'reign marks', they became popular from the early Ming dynasty (around the start of the 15th century) all the way through to the end of the Qing dynasty just before World War I. Theoretically, the mark denotes in which dynasty the piece was made and during the reign of which emperor. However in practice, these Chinese pottery marks are just one of a number of pieces of specific information needed to properly authenticate the provenance and value of Asian porcelain.The position of the mark depends on the piece on which it is adorned and Chinese pottery marks will usually be found on the base. The earliest reign marks attributed to Ming Emperors Yongle, Xuande and Chenghua were inscribed on the inside of vessels but later marks are usually found on the underside.These reign marks on Chinese ceramics comprise of four or six characters and are written vertically in columns in one of two very different styles – kaishu or regular script, and zhuanshu, seal-form script. They all follow a pre-set format:The first two characters refer to the dynasty. Da Ming, 'Great Ming' means the piece is from the Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644) and Da Qing, 'Great Qing' means the piece is from the Qing dynasty (1644 – 1911).The second two characters refer to the name of the emperor in whose reign the piece was manufactured and the third set of two characters read 'nian zhi', or 'made for.'For example, the Chinese pottery mark that reads Da Ming Xuande Nian Zhi, means 'Made in the great Ming dynasty during the reign of the Emperor Xuande.Interestingly, there was short period during the reign of Qing dynasty emperor Kangxi where he forbade the use of his reign mark on all but the very finest pieces for the imperial court in case the Chinese ceramics were smashed or discarded. To counter this, the potters either left the double blue circles in which the marks were usually found empty or used auspicious symbols in underglaze blue such as rabbits, artemisia leaves, ruyi sceptres or the lingzhi mushroom.To muddy the waters a little, it's not uncommon for Chinese pottery marks to be forged so it's always worth speaking to experts to be sure. In addition, there was a fashion for potters to copy other markings out of reverence and respect for other artists. For example, you may find a fifteenth-century Ming dynasty reign mark on eighteenth-century Qing dynasty Oriental pottery since during that time the quality of Ming vases was at its zenith.The History of Chinese Ceramics – From Prehistory to the 10th CenturyPieces of Oriental pottery from 20,000 years ago have been found at the Xianrendong site in China's Jiangxi province but by the middle to late Neolithic period, (5000 – 1500 BC) many of the early farming cultures such as the Yangshao and Longshan were making highly decorative earthenware vessels. These took the form of (mainly) funerary storage jars decorated with geometric designs, whorls, volutes and sawtooth patterns with sweeping, rhythmic brushwork that defied the primitive age.The people of the Bronze Age Shang dynasty that followed made ash-glazed Chinese pottery and from the end of the Spring and Autumn period (approximately 771 – 476 BC) to the start of the Warring States period (476 – 221 BC), hard-bodied Chinese ceramics fired at very high temperatures were made. Many of these vessels had traditionally impressed decorations such as pushing fabric cord into the wet clay and then firing them.Undoubtedly the most famous example of Chinese pottery from around this time is the 8,000+ soldiers of the Terracotta Army (as well as 130 chariots pulled by 520 horses and 150 cavalry horses along with numerous non-military figures such as bureaucrats, musicians, acrobats and strongmen). These figures depicted the legions of Qin Shi Huang, China's first emperor.It has been suggested that the first evidence of Chinese pottery production as both an artform and as a skill was found during the second imperial Han dynasty (202 BC – 220 AD). This age saw the development of hunping pottery which translates as 'soul vase', a type of elaborately sculpted and highly stylised funerary vessel found in the tombs of Han and Six Dynasties nobility.But it was during the Tang dynasty (618 – 906) that the production of Chinese ceramics became more sophisticated. The Tang artists experimented with different kiln temperatures as well as new and fascinating dyes and stains which resulted in the three-colour 'sancai' style, the high-fired lime-glazed celadon pieces of this beautiful oriental pottery (known as 'qingci') and the highly translucent white Asian porcelain, especially from the Hebei and Hunan regions. In fact the celadon pieces proved so popular they were produced well into the succeeding dynasties and were exported to neighbouring Korea and Japan and as far away as Egypt.In 851, famed Arab traveller Suleiman was one of the first foreigners to mention Chinese pottery in Chain of Chronicles where he wrote, 'They have in China a very fine clay with which they make vases which are as transparent as glass; water is seen through them.'The History of Chinese Pottery – From Jingdezhen to TodayDuring the reign of Song dynasty Emperor Zhenzong (997 – 1022), the eponymous town of Jingdezhen in the north-eastern Jiangxi province became the centre of Chinese ceramics production and remained so for a thousand years. Through the Song and Yuan dynasties, this most beautiful Asian porcelain was mass-produced and many of the decorative patterns adorning the various vessels were elegant descriptions of daily life and the beauty of nature.First produced under the Mongol-led Yuan dynasty, the world-famous blue and white Chinese pottery reached its zenith during the Ming dynasty and while the style, decoration and shape changed with the ascension of each subsequent Ming emperor to the imperial throne, the quality of Chinese ceramics produced during this time are indisputably (or arguably) superior to that of any other era before or since.It was during the Ming dynasty that China shifted to a market economy and the kilns at Jingdezhen mass-produced Chinese pottery on an industrial and unprecedented scale both for export and for the imperial court. Indeed one royal order for this most beautiful Asian porcelain was for 450,000 pieces.As the Ming dynasty made way for the Qing dynasty in the mid-seventeenth century, the manufacture of Chinese ceramics was further enriched with the development of 'five-colour' porcelain known as 'wucai'. This style of Chinese pottery which became incredibly popular in the West was created by applying overglaze pigments of reds, greens, purples, yellows and blues after they had been fired once with a blue underglaze. After the pigments were applied the vessels were fired again.The tumultuous final years of the Qing – China's last imperial dynasty – coincided with a downturn in the quality of Chinese ceramics as the resulting political instability took an inevitable toll on the world of arts and culture. However, over the last decades, production is being revived both as modern interpretations and in the traditional styles. 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The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Translated by Nick R The history of ceramics around the globe is so vast and fascinating that a single blog would be insufficient to recount it. That is why today we are going to retell the history of ceramics, precisely, in one of the most relevant countries in this field, indeed; we talk about China. China is well-known worldwide for manufacturing all styles of ceramics since immemorial times. It was also the first place to implement color in glazing and enameling techniques, as well as using kilns for ceramics and commercializing ceramics. There is a lot to be said about this subject, and here, we will tell you more about it. Pottery was first seen in China 20,000 years ago, born out of the necessity of Chinese ancestors to prepare, transport, and pack their food. Back then, in order to feed themselves, people used to open large holes in the ground, fill them with water and pour raw food into them to finally set fire to large stones to throw into the water so that it would heat up and cook the food. Another method that ancestors used to cook, little known and for many weird or disgusting, consisted of opening a hole in the ground and putting stones heated with fire as well. But there, they would take out the entrails of the hunted animals and fill them with heated stones, and then these animals would be thrown into the hole where the meat was cooked by the heat of the rocks. By the Neolithic, people began to make ceramic pieces such as bowls in all sizes for cooking or transporting their food. This was achieved by mixing earth and water, which they molded and decorated using different decoration techniques to finish by drying it in the sun. From that moment on, many more modeling techniques were developed, thus allowing people to make the pieces faster and improve them more and more. Besides, more natural materials such as leaves, sticks, and stones were found and employed to elaborate the dough used to manufacture ceramic items. Pottery underwent several changes and advances over the years, and in this the Dynasties that ruled during the Chinese history are involved. Here we will describe the history of ceramics in each Dynasty. Although it has not been confirmed, studies show that the first porcelain was made during this dynasty in the province of Zhejiang. The type of piece elaborated at that time consisted of whole sets of celadon porcelain. Among the items produced are recognized vases, boxes, bells, bottles, pots, and instruments ("chunyu"- for example). The main difference between celadon porcelain and other types of porcelain or ceramics is its color, as the pieces are light gray, celadon green, yellowish-green, and brownish-black. All these colors are translucent, that is, light can pass through them. This dynasty also promoted the development of pottery, as many of the pieces we mentioned before were commercialized. Pretty great, right? But you may be wondering: how come they made enough pieces to commercialize them? Well, the potter's wheel and the pottery kiln, called Yue Kiln, were also first used in this period, which undoubtedly accelerated and improved the pottery production process. Such kilns were built on hills, where they placed brick walls and a platform in between these two walls. The ceramic pieces would be placed on this base with a fire in the lower part that cooked the works perfectly. In this dynasty, various types of ceramics were manufactured, such as Sancai porcelains characterized by being tricolor pieces, that is, they are decorated with three colors, among which green, brown, yellow, and white stand out. It is essential to understand that during this dynasty China adopted Buddhism, which enabled it to trade and negotiate with various countries in the world, such as India, Japan, Iran, the Pacific Islands, and Mesopotamia while respecting cultural differences. Commercialization during this dynasty led to the appearance of lead glazing, as perfected lead was brought in from different countries ready to be applied to the pieces. Remember that lead is a metal known for its bluish-gray color. This material has been used to manufacture weapons, tools, and other artistic objects. Particularly, for ceramics, for making lead glazes, people used to grind it to powder and then mix it with other materials such as copper oxide, iron, and magnesium. Once they were mixed, potters would sprinkle this mixture onto the pieces, thus getting a layer of lead that added a nice and shiny glaze to the items. Therefore, this glaze made it possible to obtain lighter and brighter colors, a brightness that many of the works preserved since then have not lost. Speaking a bit about the pieces, what were they and what were they like? The pieces that were made during the Tang dynasty were tableware characterized by their broad, swollen bodies and thin, narrow necks. All these creations were decorated manually using various techniques such as incision, printing, or painting. Typically, the pieces were painted with dots, lines, and chevrons, meaning a pattern of black arrows pointing in the same direction. The pieces were also decorated with birds, foliage, and flower drawings, all painted in the above-mentioned colors. We also want to highlight that, in this period, some earthenware items were made, which allowed them to refine the white pottery or better known as kaolin. Of the pieces made of this type of clay, we find lidded vases, bowls, cups, bottles, goblets, cosmetic boxes, offering plates, and spittoons. Such creations all had light colors such as white or gray. In addition to tableware pieces, human and animal figures (horses and camels) were also made under this dynasty. Without a doubt, in this era, many techniques were perfected, and the production of ceramics increased. Taken from AliExpress To the misfortune of the artists, potters, and ceramists in this dynasty, the country suffered many ups and downs as invaders who wanted to take over China appeared. That affected them as they had to move from one place to another to avoid war. However, not everything was bad here, thanks to these invasions, artists could spend most of their time indoors working on their creations and perfecting their techniques. That is why they managed to create pieces similar to those of the Tang Dynasty, and besides them, they also made pieces with simpler shapes, such as plates. Such objects were made from the most expensive materials. Thanks to the materials they worked with, most of the pieces of the potters were collected by the court. Several of these objects had light colors, such as white and gray, as well as more vivid colors, which added a touch of sophistication to the piece, like blue. To conclude with this dynasty, we want to point out that their pieces and decoration imitated bronze and jade very well. Remember that jade is an ornamental, translucent stone of bright green considered in Chinese culture as the "Gem of Heaven" since it was associated with immortality and the power to establish a bridge between heaven and earth. The evolution and development of ceramics in this dynasty were complex, yet unremarkable. This was because of the dynasty's instability, which collapsed along with the country's economy; therefore, many fields were negatively affected, and ceramics was not an exception. During this period, a new type of pottery called Shu-fu emerged. This continued to comprise fine pieces of white porcelain; only these were of an opaque and light bluish-green color. The pieces that were made all were decorated with flower and phoenix patterns, a Greek mythological bird characterized by being large and having the ability to regenerate from the ashes of its predecessor, i.e., it is on fire. The artifacts were also decorated in bas-relief, that is, their figures were made in such a way that gentle subsidence was generated on the surface of the pieces. When the Ming dynasty rose to power, China's economy recovered, and with it, ceramics and other artistic disciplines re-emerged with new techniques and innovations. During this dynasty, ceramics made several significant advances. The first innovation consisted in making white porcelain to which the color was added by glazing, thus monochrome glaze was abandoned, that is, the application of varnish to the piece right before firing it. The production of vessels increased, all decorated with engravings, moldings, and engravings of different figures from the Chinese tradition. In this dynasty, besides white porcelains, cobalt-based blue and white ceramics emerged. Cobalt is a hard metal that resists oxidation and is characterized by its bluish-white color, beautiful to the naked eye. You should know that this material was brought from Persia, and all the pieces were admired by the Chinese. Pieces of different sizes were made to compose a dinnerware set, however, wine goblets were one of those pieces that stood out. All of these pieces excelled for featuring decorations of plants, flowers, fruits, and animals like chicks, as well as geometric shapes such as fringes and panels that divided or separated the drawings on the pieces. Another advance of this dynasty was the inclusion of human shapes of children playing, for example, as part of the decoration of many works. In addition, the representative blue color was changed to purple. A new decoration technique called "tou-ts'ai", which translates as "contrasting colors", also emerged. It consisted of using dyes of apple green, red, eggplant and lemon, all accompanied by the classic blue characteristic of this era. Another new way of decorating involved outlining the figures or drawings with dull red or black colors. Colors like red tomato, yellow, green, dark blue, eggplant, and black were used. This new form of decoration was called "wu-ts'ai" which translates as "five colors", the number of colors used. To finish with the Ming Dynasty, we would like to point out that, it was in this period that the expansion of the ceramic market increased positively, since, as a result of these advances, China began to export its products all over the world. During this same time, Europe was also producing ceramics with simpler designs compared to Chinese ones, which is why the country was forced to adapt and implement similar styles for its pieces. However, China also implemented new decorations, including traditional Chinese designs such as plum trees, lotuses, peonies, chrysanthemums, and historical depictions. All these figures were painted with families of colors, that is, in different shades of the same color. The colors that stood out were green, yellow, eggplant, red and black. It is also worth mentioning that the clay that underwent firing changed color, and with this, potters sought to imitate materials such as bronze, jade, wood, shells, and lacquer. Three main groups of ceramics appeared: Swatow, Yi-hsing, and Blanch. Swatow pottery is characterized by its designs with animal and flower figures, as well as human forms performing specific actions. Likewise, Yi-hsing pottery was based on similar decorations to Swatow. The difference lies in the addition of drawings of Chinese fruits and landmarks in the country to Yi-hsing pottery. Both types of ceramics were white-based, and their figures were painted in the same colors we mentioned before. Blanch pottery also had similar designs to the other two types of pottery, however, what made it different from the rest was that some of their designs and drawings were made in 3D, so they protruded from the base of each piece. In addition, it used to be entirely white – great, Right!? Because of these innovations, China became the largest exporter of ceramics, especially to Europe. Now that you know how ceramics evolved over the years throughout each of the dynasties, it is time to see what were and still are the most emblematic pieces of ceramics in China. Below, we will show them and explain a little about each one of them. Keep reading! These pieces had shapes of horses, camels, or human figures, all painted in three colors that portrayed these typical figures, green, yellow, and white. As the name says, these figures were used in funeral ceremonies, where they were placed on the tombs and meant that they would be available for the deceased's service in the afterlife. Taken from Wikipedia This one you know a little about. Remember, celadon is a costly and shiny green material. It is one of the most expensive and prestigious materials in China. The articles that were and still are made of this material are tableware pieces. However, the production of vases, ideal for home decoration, stands out. Most of these pieces are smooth, although they are also textured, embossed, carved, inscribed, or molded. Note that these pieces were acquired particularly by the academic and middle or upper classes. Here we show you one of these objects. Taken from eBay Jian Ware pottery was manufactured in the province of Fujian. They made objects of daily tableware, but some elements stood out among all that was manufactured; the elements for tea. This is because, over time, the elaboration and commercialization of ceramics increased so much that having pottery for drinking tea became important in the country. The main characteristic of these ceramics is their color. Normally, they are found in dark tones like coffee, black and blue; however, there are also items in which only the exterior of the piece is decorated with these colors while the interior colors are brighter and leave to the imagination an abstract shape. Jizhou ware creations were made in the province of Jiangxi in southern China. Items made in this type of pottery were very similar to the Jian ware because, like these, Jizhou ware pottery is characterized by its dark tones, like black or brown. However, there is a distinctive feature typical of this type of pottery that has to do with the decorative finishing. The leaves of any type of tree or plant were used to decorate these pieces, which were placed on the inside of the object when the glaze was still fresh and then baked. This process would mark the leaf's silhouette on the piece as part of the decoration. Taken from Wikipedia Ding ware owes its name to the place where it used to be made, this is a type of pottery produced in Ding County, Hebei Province in northern China. This type of pottery became very influential as it was mainly purchased by the empire. This was because all the pieces stood out from the others for being white and having graffito designs, that is, done on the raw clay with a pointed tool. This undoubtedly gives them that touch of elegance that attracted the attention of royalty. In addition, its edges were made of gold and silver. Very sophisticated, don't you think? Like Ding ware pottery, Ru ware was used and acquired by the empire. Their likeness is impressive, for the edges of some of these pieces were painted silver and gold as well. However, if you want to distinguish them, here we tell you how to do it. It is really simple, the main difference is that Ru ware ceramic is totally smooth, it has no design whatsoever. The color can also help guide you since it is not completely white, but its tones are light, and the most common of all is blue or green mixed with white. It is noteworthy that some of the Ru ware pieces were reddish-brown; however, finding them in the market was not very common.- Jun ware was and still is considered one of the most elegant porcelains. It was used and acquired mainly by the Northern Song court. Its main feature and distinguishing effects are the colors and patterns. All Jun ware pieces are painted with purple and turquoise glazes that seem to be melting onto the golden piece body. However, not all pieces are decorated this way, they are also painted even and plain in these same two colors, i.e., unicolor. Usually, purple goes on the outside and turquoise on the inside of the object. Here is an example. Taken from Wikipedia The origin of this ceramic has not been confirmed. Whether it is true or not is unknown. What do we refer to? The legend. This type of pottery has its origin in the legend of two brothers who made Celadon pottery. The eldest brother made a Ge ware, pottery that was really similar to Celadon, only that he made it in his own private kiln. In addition, there are two types of Ge ware. The first one is a warm yellow rice base type with a pattern of crackles and reddish lines decorating the item. The second has a gray glaze base and crackling. The crackles are cracks emulated in a piece, and that is what differentiates the Ge ware pieces from others. Such decorations were once done by hand, drawing line by line; however, thanks to technological advances, this decoration is nowadays done with stencils made in design software. Taken from Amazon This pottery was made in Jingdezhen in northern China. The word "Qingbai" translates as "light blue white" which is the characteristic color of this type of pottery. This color comes from a glaze used especially for these pieces, when applied on a white base, it gives this beautiful tone. As part of the decoration, some foliage is found, either smooth, sunken, or in 3D effect on the pieces. Within the pieces elaborated in this ceramics are plates and vases. Even in the 1300s, one of the last Yuan emperors in China produced and sent a vase to Pope Benedict XII as a gift. Taken from Pinterest Guan ware wares are very similar to Ge ware, their distinctive color is gray, and like Gen ware, they also contain crackles; only their walls are very thin and delicate, and the glaze is more viscous compared to the one used in Ge ware pottery. All these pieces were considered attractive and perfect for the court, which acquired them for a long time. However, it can also be said that dark-colored pieces, such as brown, were also produced, although rarely manufactured. Taken from AliExpress It is believed that blue and white ware originated in the Tang dynasty, however, bits of this kind of pieces were discovered in the province of Jiangsu, which appear to date from the 7th or 9th century. By the 14th century, blue and white porcelain became the main product for pottery production in Jingdezhen, city of Jiangxi province, China. Years later, these objects would become a success, and thus their production spread across the country. All kinds of tableware pieces began to be produced. But, there was a set of objects that stood out from all the others, these objects were the traditional tea sets. These famous pieces consisted of little cups and saucers, accompanied by a teapot, a sugar bowl, and a pitcher. Thanks to its success, tea became one of the most significant and famous beverages in the country, especially among the upper classes. All these pieces were decorated in white and blue, and white was generally used as the basis of the pieces while blue was used to decorate them. And speaking of decoration, it went from greenery or fruits to portraying real and beautiful natural landscapes that included lakes and mountains, typical rural scenes of the time. Thanks to its popularity in the country, plenty of this pottery was exported, especially tea sets to Japan. We have already spoken a little about this type of pottery as well. Remember that Blanc de Chine ceramics began to be manufactured in Dehua, Fujian province, during the Ming dynasty, and thanks to its quality and great reception, it is produced still today. China was the first country to manufacture Blanc de Chine ceramics and export them to other countries. Because of their huge admiration, everyone wanted to have them and that is why in Europe, they began to copy them for their own profit since at the time they were a great success. This porcelain is characterized by its "ivory white" or "milky white" color. At the beginning, only vases, cups, or teapots were made, but over the years, objects such as boxes, jars, bowls, lamps, flowerpots, cups, brush holders, fish, cup holders, Buddhist and Taoist figures, and other religious figures saw the light and became very famous not only in China but also in the world. One thing that distinguishes these pieces is their decoration, especially household pieces like bowls or vases that contain drawings of animals or foliage and fruits in 3D, that is, they protrude from the walls of the objects and add a unique touch to each piece. Taken from Wikipedia So we end this blog with this last type of Chinese ceramics. We hope you liked it and that, above all, you have learned about Chinese ceramics and its evolution. If you are interested in learning more about the history of ceramics all over the world, don't forget that in our blog, you can also find: History of pottery at a glanceThe history of pottery in Greece. We encourage you to discover all the background of this intriguing ancestral artistic practice that, as a respectable lover of ceramics, you have to know. Visual Arts Decorative Art Chinese pottery, objects made of clay and hardened by heat: earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain, particularly those made in China. Nowhere in the world has pottery assumed such importance as in China, and the influence of Chinese porcelain on later European pottery has been profound. The earliest evidence for art in any form in ancient China consists of crude cord-marked pottery and artifacts decorated with geometric designs found in Mesolithic sites in northern China and in the Guangdong-Guangxi regions. The dating for prehistoric culture in China is still very uncertain, but this material is probably at least 7,000 or 8,000 years old. The art of the Neolithic Period represents a considerable advance. The Yangshao (Painted Pottery) culture, named after the first Neolithic site discovered (in 1920), had its centre around the eastern bend of the Huang He (Yellow River), and it is now known to have extended across northern China and up into Gansu province. Yangshao pottery consists chiefly of full-bodied funerary storage jars made by the coiling, or ring, method. They are decorated, generally on the upper half only, with a rich variety of geometric designs, whorls, volutes, and sawtooth patterns executed in black and red pigment with sweeping, rhythmic brushwork that foreshadows the free brush painting of historical periods. Some of the pottery from the village site of Banpo (c. 4500 bce), discovered in 1953 near Xi'an in Shaanxi, have schematized fish, bird, deer, and plant designs, which are related thematically to hunting and gathering, and what may be a human face or mask. Dating for the dominant phase of the Yangshao culture may be put roughly between 5000 and 3000 bce. Over this span of two millennia the Yangshao culture progressed generally westward along the Huang He and Wei River valleys from sites in central China, such as Banpo, to sites farther west, such as Miaodigou, Majiayao, Banshan, and Machang. The art produced at these villages exhibits a clear and logical stylistic evolution, leading from representational designs to linear abstraction (the latter with occasional symbolic references). Neolithic Longshan pottery: stem cupBlack pottery stem cup, Neolithic Longshan culture, c. late 3rd millennium bce, from Rizhao, Shandong province, China; in the Shandong Provincial Museum, Jinan. Height 10.4 inches (26.5 cm).The last major phase of the Neolithic Period is represented by the Longshan culture, distinguished particularly by the black pottery of its later stages (c. 2200–1700 bce). Longshan is named after the site of its discovery in 1928, in Shandong province, although evidence increasingly suggests origins to the south along the China coast, in Jiangsu province. Its remains are widely distributed, in some sites lying directly over a Painted Pottery stratum, indicating that the Longshan culture replaced the Yangshao. In other areas there is evidence of a mixed culture, including elements of both Yangshao and Longshan, that occurred between these stages. This mixed culture is called "Longshanoid" or, after one of the sites in Hubei, Qijiaping. By contrast with the Yangshao, the fully developed Longshan pottery is wheel-made and especially thinly potted. The finest specimens have a dark gray or black body burnished to a hard, smooth surface that is occasionally incised but never painted, giving it a metallic appearance. The occasional use of open-worked design and the simulation of lugs and folded plating all suggest the highly skilled imitation of contemporary valuable copper wares (no longer extant); the existence of such copper wares heralded the transition from a lithic to a metallic culture. At this point, the superior calibre of Chinese ceramics was first attained. In Yangshao pottery, emphasis was on funerary wares. The delicate potting of the Longshan ware and the prevalence of offering stands and goblets suggest that these vessels were made not for burial but for sacrificial rites connected with the worship of ancestral spirits. Ritual vessels, oracle bones (used by shamans in divination), ceremonial jade objects and ornaments, and architecture (pounded-earth foundations, protective city walls, rectilinear organization) reflect an advanced material culture on the threshold of the Bronze Age. This culture continued in outlying areas long after the coming of bronze technology to the central Henan–Shaanxi–southern Shanxi region. The Shang dynasty saw several important advances in pottery technology, including the development of a hard-bodied, high-fire stoneware and pottery glazes. A small quantity of stoneware is covered with a thin, hard, yellowish green glaze applied in liquid form to the vessel. Shang potters also developed a fine soft-bodied white ware, employing kaolin (later used in porcelain); this ware was probably for ceremonial use and was decorated with motifs similar to those on the ritual bronzes. The only known complete specimen of a fine white stoneware dating from about 1400 bce is decorated with chevrons (linked V-shapes) and a key-fret pattern, the shoulder motifs being reminiscent of those seen on contemporary bronze vessels. Much cruder imitations of bronze vessels also occur in the ubiquitous gray pottery of the Shang dynasty. Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Chinese pottery is one of the world's most celebrated art forms, renowned for its innovation, beauty, and craftsmanship. Spanning thousands of years, Chinese ceramics have not only reflected the cultural, social, and political history of the region but have also profoundly influenced pottery traditions worldwide. From the advent of earthenware to the creation of porcelain, the evolution of Chinese pottery is a testament to human ingenuity and artistic expression.At The Pottery Hut in Mississauga, Ontario, we embrace this rich heritage by teaching pottery techniques inspired by Chinese craftsmanship. Our adult pottery classes and memberships provide a platform for pottery enthusiasts to explore this timeless art form while crafting their own unique creations. In this blog post, we'll delve into the historical influences on Chinese pottery, examining how dynasties, trade, and cultural exchange have shaped this remarkable tradition.1. The Beginnings of Chinese Pottery: Neolithic PeriodChinese pottery dates back to the Neolithic period (circa 10,000–2000 BCE), when early communities crafted simple, utilitarian earthenware. These pieces were hand-built using coiling techniques and fired at low temperatures in primitive kilns. Early Chinese ceramics were primarily functional, used for storage, cooking, and ceremonial purposes.The Yangshao culture (5000–3000 BCE) is particularly notable for its painted pottery. Decorated with geometric patterns and motifs, these early ceramics demonstrate the community's artistic sensibilities and connection to nature. As pottery-making techniques advanced, the Longshan culture (3000–1900 BCE) introduced wheel-thrown pottery, which allowed for greater precision and refinement.At The Pottery Hut, we teach hand-building and wheel-throwing techniques inspired by these ancient practices, helping students appreciate the origins of this art form while creating their own functional and decorative pieces.2. The Bronze Age and the Rise of Glazed PotteryThe Shang (1600–1046 BCE) and Zhou (1046–256 BCE) dynasties marked a significant period of innovation in Chinese pottery. During this era, potters began experimenting with high-temperature firing techniques and the use of glazes. These advancements led to the creation of hardier ceramics with smoother finishes, paving the way for the production of stoneware.The influence of bronze casting techniques on pottery design is also evident during this period. Potters began to emulate the intricate designs and shapes of bronze vessels, creating ceremonial pottery that mirrored the grandeur of metalwork. This blend of artistry and functionality set the stage for the sophisticated ceramics that would emerge in later dynasties.Our adult pottery classes at The Pottery Hut often draw inspiration from this period, encouraging students to experiment with glazes and explore the artistic potential of functional ceramics.3. The Han Dynasty: The Birth of PorcelainThe Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) was a transformative era for Chinese pottery. It was during this time that proto-porcelain, a precursor to the fine porcelain China would later become famous for, began to emerge. Han potters combined kaolin clay with high-temperature firing techniques to create a more durable and translucent material.This period also saw the introduction of lead glazes, which added vibrant colors to pottery. Common motifs included dragons, clouds, and other symbols of prosperity and longevity, reflecting the cultural values of the time.At The Pottery Hut, we explore the Han Dynasty's innovations by teaching students how to work with porcelain clay and experiment with colored glazes. These techniques allow participants to create pottery that combines elegance with historical inspiration.4. Tang Dynasty: The Flourishing of Trade and Cultural ExchangeThe Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE) marked a golden age for Chinese ceramics. The expansion of the Silk Road facilitated cultural exchange and trade, introducing Chinese pottery to regions as far as the Middle East and Europe. The famous sancai, or "three-color," glaze technique emerged during this period, producing vibrant green, yellow, and white ceramics often used for tomb figurines and vessels.Tang pottery also reflects influences from Persian and Central Asian art, showcasing the blending of cultural traditions. This cross-pollination of ideas and techniques elevated Chinese pottery to new artistic heights and helped establish its global reputation.Students at The Pottery Hut often find inspiration in the vibrant colors and bold designs of Tang Dynasty ceramics. Our workshops provide a space to experiment with multi-colored glazing techniques, blending historical artistry with modern creativity.5. The Song Dynasty: The Pinnacle of EleganceThe Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE) is often regarded as the pinnacle of Chinese ceramics, celebrated for its minimalist and refined aesthetic. During this period, potters focused on form and glaze rather than decoration, creating subtle yet striking pieces.Key styles from the Song Dynasty include: • Ru ware: Known for its soft, bluish glaze and delicate crackle pattern. • Ding ware: White porcelain with incised or molded decorations. • Longquan celadon: Green-glazed stoneware that became highly prized both domestically and internationally.The Song Dynasty's emphasis on simplicity and craftsmanship resonates with modern pottery enthusiasts. At The Pottery Hut, we encourage students to explore these principles by focusing on clean lines, harmonious proportions, and the interplay between form and glaze.6. The Ming Dynasty: The Age of Blue and White PorcelainThe Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 CE) is synonymous with blue and white porcelain, one of the most iconic styles in Chinese pottery. This technique involved painting intricate designs with cobalt oxide on a white porcelain base, which was then coated with a clear glaze and fired at high temperatures.Blue and white porcelain became highly sought after in Europe, where it influenced the development of Delftware and other ceramic traditions. The global demand for Ming porcelain established China as a leader in ceramic production and trade.At The Pottery Hut, we teach students how to create their own blue and white designs using underglaze painting techniques. This allows participants to connect with the historical legacy of Chinese ceramics while adding a personal touch to their work.7. The Qing Dynasty and Beyond: Innovation and AdaptationThe Qing Dynasty (1644–1912 CE) continued the tradition of ceramic excellence, introducing new colors, patterns, and firing techniques. Famille rose and famille verte enamels added vibrant hues to porcelain, while new kiln technologies improved production efficiency.During this time, Chinese ceramics faced competition from European manufacturers, leading to further innovation and adaptation. The influence of Chinese pottery on global ceramic traditions is evident in styles such as Chinoiserie, which reflects a European fascination with Chinese motifs.At The Pottery Hut, we celebrate this period of innovation by encouraging students to experiment with new techniques and materials. Our classes offer a blend of traditional and contemporary approaches, empowering participants to push the boundaries of their creativity.8. The Lasting Legacy of Chinese PotteryChinese pottery's influence extends far beyond its historical origins. Its emphasis on craftsmanship, innovation, and cultural expression has inspired generations of potters worldwide. Whether it's the delicate beauty of Song celadon or the vibrant patterns of Ming porcelain, Chinese ceramics continue to captivate artists and collectors alike.At The Pottery Hut in Mississauga, we are proud to share this legacy with our community. Our family-owned studio offers adult pottery classes and memberships that invite participants to explore the history of ceramics while developing their own artistic voice. By learning from the past, we can create pottery that reflects the timeless beauty and craftsmanship of Chinese traditions.Discover the Art of Pottery at The Pottery HutThe history of Chinese pottery is a testament to the enduring power of art and innovation. From the humble beginnings of earthenware to the global fame of porcelain, Chinese ceramics have shaped the way we view and create pottery. By understanding and embracing these historical influences, we can continue to celebrate the rich heritage of this remarkable art form.At The Pottery Hut, we invite you to join us on a journey through the world of ceramics. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced potter, our classes provide the tools and inspiration to create pottery that reflects your unique style. Book a class today or become a member to explore the rich traditions of Chinese pottery and beyond. Let's shape history—one piece at a time. Visual Arts Decorative Art Chinese pottery, objects made of clay and hardened by heat: earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain, particularly those made in China. Nowhere in the world has pottery assumed such importance as in China, and the influence of Chinese porcelain on later European pottery has been profound. The earliest evidence for art in any form in ancient China consists of crude cord-marked pottery and artifacts decorated with geometric designs found in Mesolithic sites in northern China and in the Guangdong-Guangxi regions. The dating for prehistoric culture in China is still very uncertain, but this material is probably at least 7,000 or 8,000 years old. The art of the Neolithic Period represents a considerable advance. The Yangshao (Painted Pottery) culture, named after the first Neolithic site discovered (in 1920), had its centre around the eastern bend of the Huang He (Yellow River), and it is now known to have extended across northern China and up into Gansu province. Yangshao pottery consists chiefly of full-bodied funerary storage jars made by the coiling, or ring, method. They are decorated, generally on the upper half only, with a rich variety of geometric designs, whorls, volutes, and sawtooth patterns executed in black and red pigment with sweeping, rhythmic brushwork that foreshadows the free brush painting of historical periods. Some of the pottery from the village site of Banpo (c. 4500 bce), discovered in 1953 near Xi'an in Shaanxi, have schemat