

# The Influence of Chinese Pottery on the Nabataean Pottery During the 1st Century BC and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD

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# The Influence of Chinese Pottery on the Nabataean Pottery During the 1st Century BC and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD

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**Abstract:** The ancient China's historic stages may be separated into some certain ages: Paleolithic, Neolithic, Bronze, and Iron Age. There were only broken stone tools in the Paleolithic age. The Paleolithic age witnessed stone tools and copper pottery during the excavations; major relics of the old Nabataean and Byzantine village of Aila were uncovered, which flourished from first century B.C. through the Earliest Muslim invasion. The remnants of the historic Nabataean and Byzantine town of Aila, which existed from the first century B.C. through the Early Muslim invasion, were discovered during the excavation. Chinese pottery played a big role in the economic industries all over the world. This trade was famous according to ancient Chinese families such as Yangshao and Cishan (Zhang et al., 2019, p. 112). During the first century BC and the 2nd century AD, Chinese commerce witnessed a strong export for Chinese ceramics to some majority of countries, particularly the Middle East (Miksic, 2009, p. 72). The types of pottery were exported to the Middle East. This is a product that is mostly exported from China. Finally, Chinese pottery is undoubtedly spread in some certain areas for many centuries BC. Some famous Chinese families such as Yangshao and Longshan cultures started eliciting the soil and manufactured various shapes of pottery. Chinese pottery was transformed to Aqaba and then to Petra where the remains of Chinese pottery were founded. It is evidence of a certain kind of trade between China and Nabataean Arabs.

**Keywords:** earthenware; Nabataeans; Chinese porcelain.

## 1. Introduction

According to the manufacturing methods, ancient China's historic stages may be separated into some certain ages: Paleolithic, Neolithic, Bronze, Chalcolithic, and Iron Age. There were only broken stone tools in the Paleolithic Age. The utensils made of polished stone appeared in the Neolithic Age which spans the middle and early eras. The Paleolithic Age witnessed stone tools and copper pottery while stone tools dominated (Li, 2015, p. 2). This report describes the first excavation period of the Ancient Aqaba Program near the border here between south section of Wadi Arabs and the northern portion of the Red Sea. In a supplementary Neimi (1993), the findings of the program's regional survey were discussed. Finally, some preliminary historical results are presented based on this inquiry. During the excavations, major relics of the old Nabataean and Byzantine village of Aila were uncovered, which flourished from the first century B.C. through the Earliest Muslim invasion. In the mid-sixth century A. D., after the creation of the new Muslims walled city, the significant remnants of the historic Nabataean, Roman, and Byzantine town of Aila, which existed from the first century B.C. through the Early Muslim invasion, were discovered during the excavation. After the construction of the new Islamic walled city in the mid-seventh century A. D., it appears that sections of the Byzantine colony remained populated. There was also a lot of information on the contemporary history of this worldwide commercial port (Parker, 1997, pp. 19-44).

The outcomes of digging at a Roman and Nabataean household area in Aila (Aqaba) are summarized in this article. The first dwellings were erected in the Late Nabataean era and were made of mud brick. The region was reconstructed with mud brick and stone household structures after a certain period of desertion in the early second decade A. D. It remained usable until the third century A. D. After the ultimate abandonment of the private

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structures, the land was used as a graveyard in the Early Byzantine era. Aila is examined in two different norms: as a red shipping port and as a Nabataean colony, as opposed to Egypt. In Nabataea, just a few household areas from the Roman and Nabataean eras have been unearthed as well as relatively little mud brick constructions. The pottery dress and kiln wastes of space, as well as local ceramic shapes, all lead to the same thing. Pottery and glass from Egypt and Gaza, exquisite goods from Petra, Eastern Sigillata, and various transport vases are among the imports that provide light on Aila's commercial importance (Retzleff, 2003, pp. 45-65).

Chinese pottery has a long history dating back over ten thousand years (Zhang et al., 2018, pp. 112). The earthenware with color ornamentation, as well as red or white-bodied ware, was manufactured during the Neolithic Yangshao culture while manufacturing black pottery which thrived later in the Longshan culture. The East Asian cultures were explored with pottery making and the cultivation of animals and plants during the early post-Pleistocene late Pleistocene periods. What was the structure of these early slight societies' social organization? North writers regard pottery manufacturing as a "prestige technique" supported by self-promoters. The initial assessment assemblages and site layouts were found south of the Nanling Mountains and other places. On the other hand, they show no indication of societal differentiation. There are more acceptable hypotheses for first pottery manufacturing. They focus on the communal rather than the individual based on contemporary arguments concerning social agency (Pearson, 2005, pp.2). The history of Chinese ceramic referred to Yangshao's family. The civilization was a Neolithic society that flourished near China's Yellow River. It is thought to have been made between 5000 and 3000 BC. The Yangshao town, the earliest archaeological site of this civilization, was discovered in 1921 at Yangshao village, Henan Region, Mianchi District, by Swedish archeologist Johan Andersson (1873-1961). Provinces of Henan, Shaanxi, and Shanxi were the epicenters of the culture. The Sino-Tibetan languages have a common ancestor in Yangshao, Majiayao, and Cishan societies (Zhang et al., 2018, pp. 112-115).

### 1.1. The impact of Chinese ceramics on the Middle East

It is undoubtedly sure that Chinese ceramic and pottery played a big role in the economic industries all over the world (Zhang et al., 2019, p. 112). This trade was old and famous according to ancient Chinese families such as Yangshao, Majiayao, and Cishan. During their ages, these families used some specific tools in eliciting the soil of pottery. Their stone implements were extremely specialized and polished. They may have also engaged in an early kind of sericulture (Zhang et al., 2019, pp. 112-115). By combining ceramic science and archaeology, art, history, and lifestyle, Chinese pottery offers a multidisciplinary approach. Readers will learn about the science and technology of ceramics, as well as the beauty of ceramic marvels crafted by ancient great potters (Rice, 1999, pp. 1-54).

During the first century BC and the 2nd century AD, Chinese commerce witnessed a strong export for Chinese ceramics to some majority of countries, particularly the Middle East (Miksic, 2009a, p. 72). This period also flourished a large export of pottery to Asian market. Stoneware pottery had been fired for a higher temperature and glazed. There were three primary types of stoneware pottery. These types of pottery were exported to the Middle East. This is a product that is mostly exported from China. The epochs: "Changsha," Yue, and Ceramics by Xing (Li, 2010, p. 231). Changsha Ceramics are called for the clay that they are made of. The human people may be found all around the world. There were some locations in the Southeast that produced these types of pottery and then exported to Asian countries. Changsha ceramics were made in Changsha, China. 25-30 km apart, there were numerous significant kiln sites particularly the north of the town (Liu, 2010, p. 146). Changsha was known for including a diverse range of forms bowls, plates, and other items. There was a strong relationship between the Chinese pottery trade and the Middle East countries. The traditional overland trade road was to Saudi Arabia by reviving Egyptian beaches among the red Sea.

### 1.2. The impact of Chinese pottery on Nabataean pottery

Chinese pottery is undoubtedly spread in some certain areas for many centuries BC. Some famous Chinese families such as Yangshao and Longshan cultures started eliciting the soil and manufactured various shapes of pottery. After that, these people started trading these shapes of pottery and sold them inside and outside China. It is noticed that the Chinese pottery was transformed to Aqaba and then to Petra where the remains of Chinese pottery were founded. It is evidence of a certain kind of trade between China and Nabataean Arabs. The absence of Nabataean pottery in the Sirhan area may indicate an ethnic and elite Nabataeans who were hesitant to continue moving towards the north. This article will show and explain changes that occurred inside the Nabataean monarchy over the first centuries BC and AD. Scholars have traditionally viewed King Aretas the fourth (10 BC to AD 41) during the motivating force in the Nabataean Country. The evidence suggests that the Nabateans transitioned sooner than over a period of years, most likely starting with Malichus I's (61-31 BC) and Obodas (61-31 BC) building of the harbors of Aila and Leuke Kome (31-8 BC). Supported by evidence from different parts of the countries indicating older settlement intensities, Aretas IV played a crucial role in the change of Nabataea, although he was not the first nor the lone architect of the shift (Gentry, 2017, pp. 23-28).

During the 1st century BC until the 2nd century AD, the Nabataeans were instrumental in the ceramic commerce. This period was between Arabian Peninsula and Mediterranean era. In southern Jordan, documentary sources now reveal almost little about these inhabitants, but an archaeological record for Nabataean culture abounds after years of investigation, particularly in and around Petra in southern Jordan. The beautiful sight of

this city continued to fascinate visitors today, and the area is still considered one of the wonders of the contemporary world. Yet, Petra's ornate tomb façades merely hint at old Arab aristocracy. Over the ages, these great figures of antiquity have definitely altered in major ways. Moreover, it appears that in the first century BC, architecture Nabataean pottery was significantly altered (Gentry, 2017, p. 23-28).

Gentry (2017, pp. 23-28) added that during this time, Nabataea progressed from nomadic people with a centrally controlled tribal culture to a more governmental kingdom with an elite class that experienced economic growth and expansionism. Some documentary sources provide a glance of this total transformation. The goal of this article is to summarize clear signs for this transition and describe both its cause and effects.

The alternative reasons for Nabataea's transition include the emergence of a stable Mediterranean market joined by the Romans, as well as the forceful and largely successful Nabataean reaction to the Romans' attempt to bypass the traditional overland trade road to Arabia by reviving Egyptian ports along the Red Sea. The Nabataeans confronted a difficulty in the first century BC. They had survived as desert nomads by plying their trade along the caravan road between Arabia and the Mediterranean. Rome acquired access to the Red Sea with the rise of the Roman Empire, offering an alternative route to Far Eastern goods. Despite this possible rivalry, archeological evidence from the Nabataean kingdom reveals that the Nabataeans flourished and developed their trade in ceramics into a more densely inhabited area (Bienkowski, 2004, pp. 43-48). Chinese pottery, commonly known as Chinese ceramics, is a type of pottery made in China. Clay was used to make the items. Stoneware, Earthenware, and porcelain were often toughened by fire. Pottery has never had such a stronghold in the globe as it has in China, and Chinese ceramics have had a significant impact on Nabataean pottery (Cahill and Silbergeld, 2001, pp. 17-36).

### 1.3. The ancient method of manufacturing pottery

The processes of manufacturing ceramics and pottery was very old (Li, 2003, p. 31). Pottery clay was actually made by Liming (1989, p. 34) civilization. White, red, and black painted ceramics normally have animal and geometric motifs. They were made by Yangshao artists. Yangshao civilization did not employ pottery wheels in the same way that the subsequent Longshan culture did. Children were discovered buried in painted ceramic jars during excavations. The beginnings of pottery have sparked renewed scientific interest, revealing a variety of plausible triggering events and environmental conditions in which pottery was first created and utilized. This essay is an attempt to synthesize some of these findings for the sake of spurring more study into this fascinating subject. Following a review of hypotheses about the origins of pottery, the discussion moves on to an assessment of low-fired or unfired pottery's cultural and geographic settings, stressing the role of pottery among contemporary gatherer and presenting evidence on various applications of ceramic containers. Undamaged and low-fired clay items are said to have been constructed as part of early prestige technologies of actual representations that began in the Paleolithic Period and are available software horizon. In locations of abundant resources, non-sedentary, sophisticated hunter-gatherers began to use clay more frequently in the Pleistocene Epoch and early Holocene (Li, 2003, pp. 31-44).

The earliest European smooth pottery was created in 1575 in Florence at factories under the sponsorship of Francesco I de' Medici, but it was not mass-produced until the late 17th and 18th centuries. Ehrenfried, Johann Friedrich, and Böttger Tschirnhaus discovered the secret of real porcelain, akin to Chinese porcelain, in the Meissen plant in Saxony around 1707. Despite its strength, hard-paste porcelain chips quickly due to its transparent quality, whereas plate ware does not. On the Continent of Europe, pretty tough porcelain is popular, whilst skeleton China is favored in the United Kingdom and Ireland (Edwards, 2022, pp. 165-196). Edward added that the glaze, a crystal compound that was initially intended to seal a porous pottery core, is now only used for decorating on nonporous pretty tough porcelain. When the feldspar glazing and the bodies are burned together, they become inextricably linked. Biscuit porcelain, which is burned without a gloss, was first used in the eighteenth century. Ceramics were commonly used for representing figures. Pariah China was the name given to biscuit ceramic in the nineteenth century. Some smooth ceramics need a glaze because they are porous. After the corpus was burned, the glaze, which was generally lead-based, was applied and burned again to vitrify it. Despite its glaze, it remains as a somewhat thick covering.

### 1.4. The types of Chinese pottery

Dondi (2014, pp. 91-109) wrote an article about bodies for pottery tiles and clay. He denoted that in contrast to its earthenware, it is vitrified pottery with white grained body that is generally transparent. The contrast between ceramic and stoneware, another type of vitrified ceramics, is less obvious. Ceramic is described in China as ceramic that resonates when struck. When held up to the sun in the east, it is a transparent substance. Both definitions are incomplete: some strongly potted ceramic mugs are opaque, while other thinly watered stoneware is visible. Porcelain comes from the term porcelain, which Marco Polo used to identify the ceramics he encountered in China. The Paleolithic Period started with a significant advancement. The Yangshao culture which is called painted culture was identified in 1920. It was centered all around Huang River. The coiling method is used to create full-bodied burial storage jars in Yangshao pottery. They are embellished with a wide range of geometric shapes, whorls, louver, and saw tooth designs done in dark paint with sweeping and rhythmic brush strokes that foreshadows previous periods' free paintbrush artwork. From representational motifs to linear

abstractions, the art created in these settlements follows a rational and concise aesthetic progression (Cahill, 2001, pp. 17-36).

### 1.5. Types and shapes of Nabataean pottery

Nabataean pottery, distinguished by its subtlety, accuracy and smoothness, is clear evidence of the excellence and fame of the Nabataeans in this field of industries. The finest pottery was made in the historical period close to the first century AD. Where it was made of clay, the local ripeness, and the speed wheel was used in its manufacture, so they made cups, plates, yogurt, jars, saddles, and cooking tools. They made two types of pottery, the normal, coarse type, which is used in cooking, and the smooth type, which is greased. The archaeological works in the Nabataean Kingdom traced the history of Nabataean pottery back to the first century BC. M. Its production continued in Petra until the beginning of the third century AD. (Abbas, 1987). Nabataean pottery was used as an indication of the geographic map of the Nabataean kingdom. So that Jalloul drew a marginal line in which he assumed the northern boundary of painted pottery extended like this from the Dead Sea - that is, from its end to Madaba in Jordan. Research and other archaeological works north of this line showed the presence of Jordanian Nabatean pottery pieces in Amman, Jerash, Umm al-Jimal and Bosra. In addition to fractures and fragments found in southern Palestine, Sinai, northern Arabia, and Faw and Failaka in eastern Arabia. These pottery pieces that were found outside the area of influence of the Nabateans can be traced back to Nabatean travelers or traders as they transported the vessels with them on their long-distance trips and traded them in all their commercial lines except for the thin type that was difficult to trade in because it was easy to break during transportation. Most of the civilizations produced, but the high-quality, fine Nabataean pottery, called 'eggshell pottery' due to its delicacy, is the most distinguished of all, and it is among the finest pottery produced worldwide (Al-Majidi, 2012).

Al-Muhaisin (2009) indicated that various types of pottery were made in the Nabataean Kingdom, from thin to rough, including saddles and statues. Studies have shown a clear shift from the production of red pottery during the early stages toward the production of pottery with a white surface in the later stages. One of the reasons is the higher degree of burning resulting from the development of kilns building, where white pottery is produced at higher temperatures than red, and there is another trend in the manufacture of colored pottery, as the proportion of its production decreased with the passage of time although it continued until the sixth century AD. The types of Nabataean pottery are colorful pottery. This following type is just an example of these different shapes:



Pottery with printed or rolled designs is the second style of Nabataean pottery. Pottery with rolled decorations was created using a wheel or a miniature wheel, with the decoration rolled on the pot's surface before it became fired. Coarse pottery is the third form of Nabataean pottery. The inspired shapes of this sort of pottery, which include everyday pots like kitchenware and jars, are mainly influenced by prior Hellenistic forms.

### 1.6. Shapes of Chinese pottery

Chinese pottery, also known as Chinese ceramics, is clay-based, heat-hardened products such as stoneware, earthenware, and porcelain. They are already created in China. Pottery has never had such a stronghold in the globe as it has in China, and Chinese ceramic has had a significant impact on subsequent Nabatean pottery. The evolution of style and history is actually very old. The time of this evolution is nearly 1600 BC. Although the chronology of prehistoric civilization in China is still debated (Cahill & Silbergeld, 2001, pp. 17-36). Here are some ancient Chinese pottery and ceramic shapes:





The above figure shows some kinds of pottery and ceramic shapes: In the list that follows, dynasties are identified:

- 1-4 Culture in Yangshao
- 5-6 Western Zhou
- 9-12 Ta'ng Dynasty
- 28 – 34 Yuan Dynasty
- 35-40 years during the Ming Dynasty the Qing Dynasty was a period of Chinese history that began in 1644 (Liming & Wilcock, 1989, pp. 363-374).

## 2. Conclusion

There were some old ages that were found such as Paleolithic, Neolithic, Bronze, and Iron Age. The Paleolithic age witnessed stone tools and copper pottery during the excavations. Some main relics of the old Nabataean and Byzantine village of Aila were not discovered, which flourished from first century B.C. through the Earliest Muslim invasion. The remnants of the historic Nabataean were discovered during the excavation period. On the other hand, Chinese pottery played an important role in the economic industries all over the world. This trade was known and famous according to ancient Chinese families like Yangshao and Cishan (Zhang et al., 2019, p. 112). The types of pottery were exported to the Middle East. This is a product that is mostly exported from China. Chinese pottery is undoubtedly spread in some certain areas for many centuries BC. Chinese pottery was transformed to Aqaba and then to Petra where the remains of Chinese pottery were founded. It is evidence of a certain kind of trade between China and Nabataean Arabs.

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