

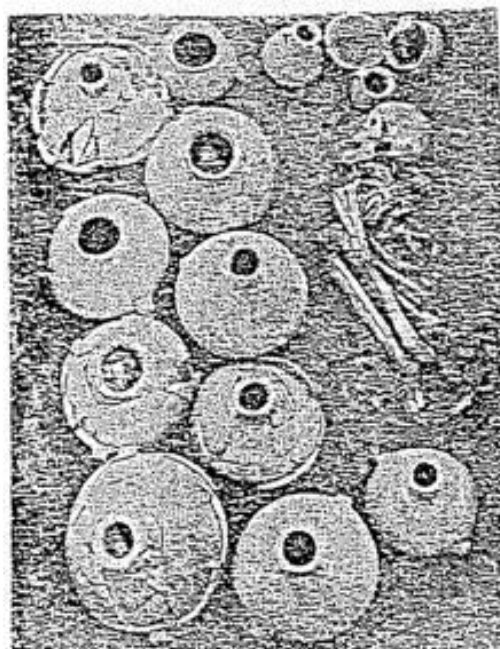
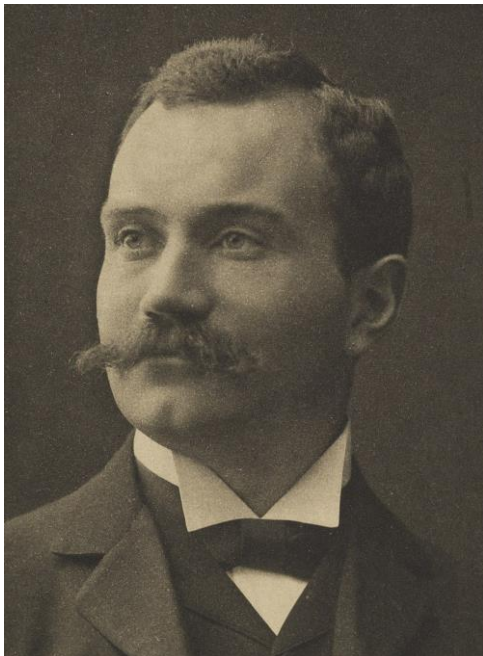
Chinese Neolithic Earthenware's at The Burrell Collection

The Search for the Neolithic in China

It was during the early twentieth century through Western influence that a search for new values arose in China. The actual term for archaeology 'kaoguxue' evolved in the 1920's and 1930's. The search for the Neolithic age in China explicitly took up the issue of the origins of Chinese civilisation. Under imperialistic thinking, China was deluded into believing that it had not been capable of creating a civilisation. The Chinese government funded a large number of archaeological projects to trace the development of early Chinese society, more than six thousand sites were identified⁽¹⁾. Pottery is the fundamental criteria for distinguishing and defining the origins of field agriculture and animal domestication. It is the most crucial evidence for understanding the main traditions and distribution of the Neolithic age' both geographically, physically and historically.

Dr Andersson, a pioneer in Chinese Archaeology.

The first Neolithic settlement was discovered In 1921 by Dr Johan Gunnar Andersson, a pioneer in Chinese Archaeology. In 1921 he located the first Neolithic village site near Yanshao ts'un. He then organised and led a great expedition to Gansu province North West China, during which he examined and localised 50 sites (villages and burial grounds). Dr Andersson categorised the finds from Gansu into six cultural groups⁽²⁾, the two groups which apply to this collection are namely the Banshan and the Ma ch'ang groups, in 1925 a considerable number of these finds were purchased by private collectors, one of which was Mr. N.S. Brown. A substantial amount of Mr. Brown's collection was then sold to Mr. Burrell in the 1940's.



Sir William Burrell's purchases of Chinese Neolithic Earthenware's 1944-1948

William Burrell's purchases during the first years were quite modest and chiefly confined to Chinese pottery and bronzes.

- **First Purchase:** 7/12/1944 William Burrell purchased seven Neolithic earthenware's from Frank Partridge and Sons (the earthenware's previously belonged to the N.S. Brown Collection, and were sold at auction)
- **Dealers:** Sir William Burrell purchased Chinese Neolithic Earthenware's from: Frank Partridge and Sons, Bluett and Sons, Sydney Moss, W.Williams, Whylock and Reid, John Hunt and John Sparks.
- **Last Purchase:** 29/1/1948 William Burreil purchased a total of 13 Chinese Neolithic earthenware's from Bluett and Sons(the earthenware's previously belonged to the N.S. Brown Collection, and were sold at auction)
- **Highest price paid:** £110, Banshan Funerary Urn currently located in the Store room (38/4)Former N.S. Brown Collection, William Burrell purchased from Frank Partridge and Sons 7/12/1944
- **Total Number of purchases:** Chinese Neolithic Earthenware's in the Burrell Collection: 40, 11 of which are on display in the Burrell collection
- **Exhibitions:** 1951 One piece on display NO.1721949 Glasgow, 31 pieces on display in the Mc Lellan Galleries, Glasgow, 1946 Nine pieces on display at the Glasgow Art Gallery

The production of Neolithic Earthenware's

Material

- The clay comes from sticky deposits at the base of the loess. The reddish colour of the Neolithic Earthenware's is due to the content of iron in the body. Clay which contains too much sand is not suitable and it wont take shape.

Technique

- The earth was kneaded to improve plasticity, reduce air bubbles.
- Coiling method, the clay was kept nice and moist with the addition of water to make smooth thick coils of clay that would be built from the base upwards. A pad and a beater may have been used to smoothen the coiled effect on the interior and exterior of the earthenware.
- The clay would then dry for a time
- Any painted patterns were applied before firing, the black and maroon painted colours commonly found oh Neolithic earthenware's is due to the varying quantities of iron and manganese.

Firing Method

- The earthenware's were fired for about three hours in an oxidising atmosphere at temperature as high as 1020 degrees C. The vessels were then sometimes coated in brown glutinous pigment when still hot. When the clay body was partially dry after firing the ancient potters rubbed the piece with pebbles to smooth the rough surface which produced lustre.
This was particularly common in the Banshan earthware's.

What were the Neolithic Earthenware's used for ?

Utilitarian objects and funerary objects, perhaps used in rituals.

The large mortuary urns were presumably used for storage or grain, such as millet.

Smaller pottery was most likely used -for storage and drinking although the liquid would have soon slipped through the porous clay as there is no glaze.

The rough pots were cooking vessels because they with the sand in the clay could absorb more heat and tended to have a rougher texture.

We must bear in mind that earthenware pots are only one kind of ancient domestic utensil, other utensils were made of natural materials such as stone, shell and bone.

Yangshao 'Painted Pottery Culture'

Yangshao is the name given to the first well defined Neolithic culture in China. The Yangshao culture possibly dates back the 6th century BC. The core area of Yangshao manifested and developed in four regions and archaeologists can trace its development in the middle Yellow river valley and along the eastern slopes of North Western highlands, south Hubei and central Henan. The Neolithic Earthenware's in the Burreil collection all belong to the Yangshao period. Scholars have subdivided this period in accordance with province and the Neolithic earthenware's in the Burreil collection mostly come from a province in North West China called Gansu therefore the culture is called the Gansu Yangshao Phase.

Gansu Yangshao Period

The Ma jia yao is the first painted pottery culture to emerge in Gansu province West China. The painted wares of Ma jia yao demonstrate that stylistically the motif evolved a zoomorphic bird. Three particular pottery traditions namely; Banshan, Ma jia Yao and Banpo, can each be closely connected because of the periodical use of the anthropomorphic images such as turtles, frogs and creatures painted on the interior or exterior of the earthenware's. The Banshan tradition has the earliest painted ware of west China, Andersson referred to the pattern of Banshan as 'death pottery'. Most of William Burrell's collection of Neolithic Earthenware's are Banshan type. The dates of the Gansu Yangshao which are relevant to this collection (in bold) are as follows;

Gansu Yangshao Cultures

Banpo Phase circa 4800-3300
Miaodigou Phase circa 3700-3000

Majiayao Phase circa 3290-2880

Banshan Phase circa 2635-2330

Ma ch'ang Phase circa 2330-2055

Qijia Phase circa 2050-1900

Banshan Earthenware's

The collection of Neolithic Earthenware's at the Burrell Collection is predominantly typologically associated with the Banshan and Machang types, primarily, what are the characteristics, dates and method of manufacture of the Banshan wares ?

Banshan lies 43 miles south of the capital of Gansu. Most of the urns were bought by Dr Andersson or by his assistants in the 1920's-1930's. Banshan is the name given to the Neolithic burial ground from which they were excavated.

Firing Temperature

- 900-1000 degrees Celsius, and in cases of over firing 1100-1200 degrees Celsius.

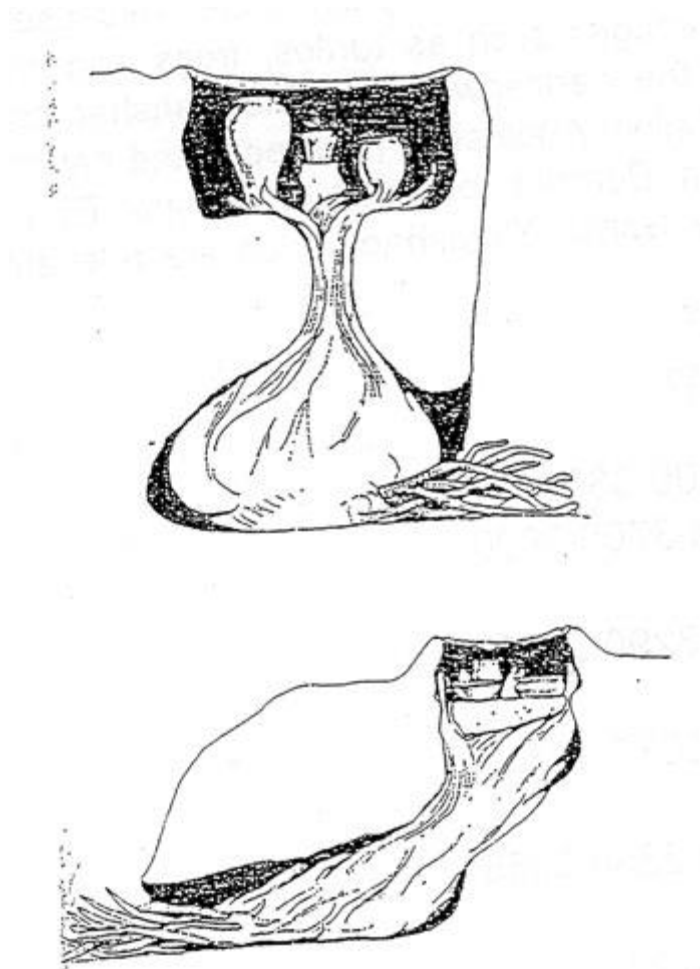
A low firing temperature created a relatively porous body that made the vessel suitable for storing only dry products, most probably grain.

Earthenware's fired in slight reduction tend to burn more buff than red, due to bleaching effect of calcium oxide on the iron oxides in the clays.

Chemical analysis of these painted designs have shown that the black slips used to decorate these vessels were often natural umbers (clays rich in iron and manganese oxides). While maroon slip was probably ochre's/ clays with unusually high contents of iron oxides.

Type of Kiln

The exact method of firing is not known, a high temperature was reached due to the construction of the kiln, the heat would have been driven through a narrow passageway to the kiln, but the exact process is not known. So far six Neolithic kiln sites have been excavated in China.



4. Vertical pottery kiln of Yang-shao Culture at Banpo, Xian.
 Fire chamber: 2.24 metres long, 2.05 metres wide and 0.9 metre high.
 Fire passage: Only two passages exist now.
 Diameter: 20 cm. Length: about 30cm.

Form/Shape of Banshan Neolithic Earthenware's:

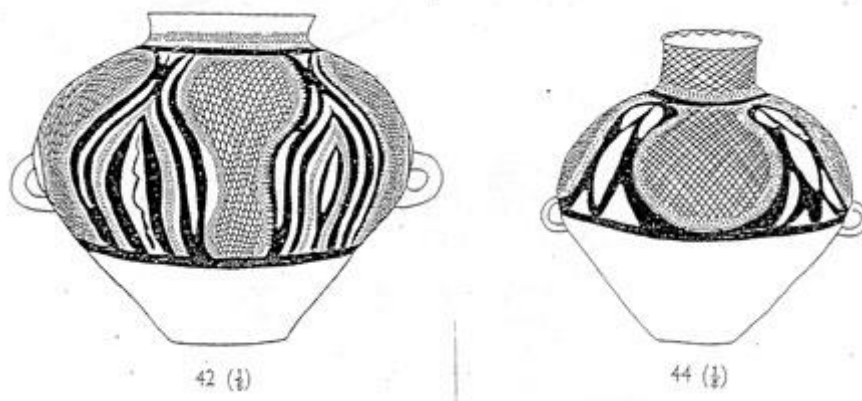
- The shape of a vessel is essentially determined by three factors: the form of the top, belly and base, and the relative position of these parts.

The forms of the Banshan belly and base are very simple, globular and flat respectively. There are about ten variations of the shape of the neck and the rim.

Banshan wares all share in common;

- The clay would have been shaped into broad flat bands which were built up in coils until the desired size and shape of vessel had been acquired, in shallow vessels and bowls the inner area is painted and not the outer surface.
- spherical shape
- the tendency to enlarge the capacity of the vessel
- Flat circular base
- Long necked vessels usually have two handles on the belly, while the vessels without necks have either no handles at all, or one or two handles near the rim.
- Only small vessels have suspension holes
- The material is very fine the coarser grains have been removed through washing.
- Generally speaking the Banshan ware is of a hard and firm quality and not porous.
- The thickness of the ware varies from 3 to 10 mm.
- The diameter of the Banshan mouth is not uniform, varies from 4 to 20 cm

The boundary, lines of decoration are so very accurate, black was put on first and then red, Perhaps they were done on a turn table because the boundary line is so precisely executed. Maybe not the wheel maybe a turntable, ask the public what they think, there is no answer to this question as yet.



Decoration:

- black is the predominant colour, bold curvilinear decoration, unique feature Banshan is a regional pottery type from Gansu, North West China.

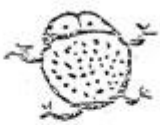





What do the decorations symbolise ?

- Designs could have pictorial, linguistic or shamanistic meaning.

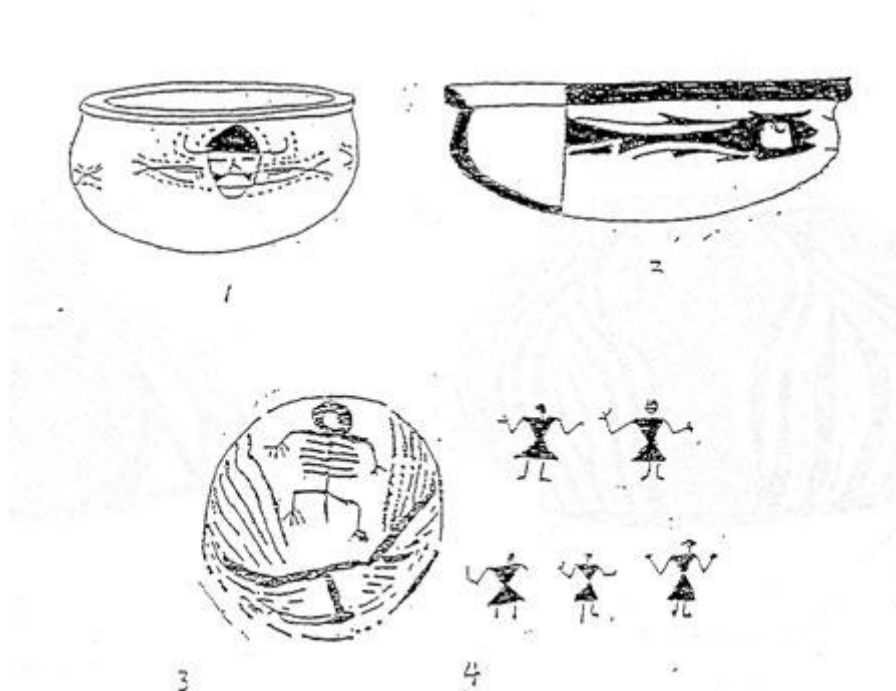
The pots were painted mostly on the upper body because they were intended to be viewed from above as half of the body would have been buried under ground.

- The designs shed light onto the geographical, physical and historical distribution of the Neolithic culture its' communities, phases, transitions and the people that lived there.

Generally no painted decoration on the cooking pots if anything it would have design on different levels from the surface of the vessel either by incising, impressing or modeling in relief.

	Banpo Period	Miaodigou Period	Majiayao Period
Frog Designs			
Bird Designs			

11. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FROG AND BIRD DECORATIONS ON THE POTTERY VESSELS OF THE YANGSHAO CULTURE

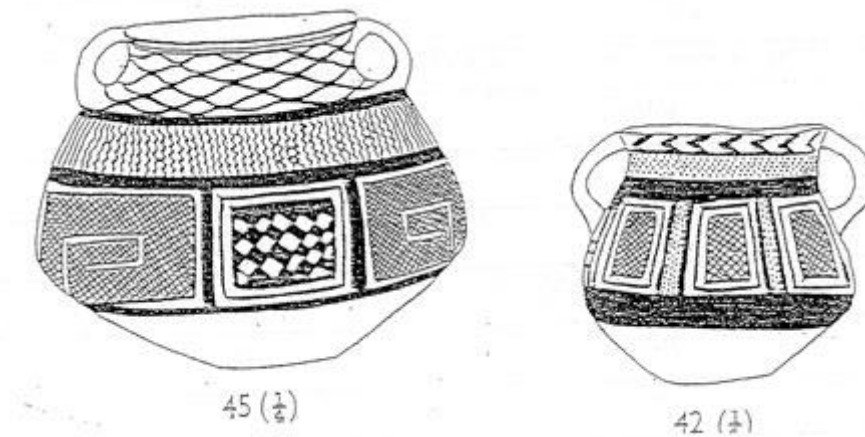


12. 1. Pottery with design of human face and fish of Yangshao Culture at Banpo, Xian.
- 2 Pottery with fish pattern of Yangshao Culture it Banpo, Xian.
- 3 Paired pottery with design of human figure of Ytngshao Culture at Majiayao.
- 4 Design of dancing human figures on pottery of Yangshao Culture at Xindian.

Ma ch'ang Earthenwares

Ma ch'ang ware is paler and has a greyer tone than the Banshan ware. The Ma Ch'ang wares would have been fired one on top of the other in the kiln. This is evident as small areas of the of painted designs may become blurred or obliterated. The necks of Ma Ch'ang earthenware's tend to be lower and the mouths smaller. Sometimes lime is found in the earthenware, the chief characteristic is a small grained texture due to the admixture of sand and clay. Ma Ch'ang earthenware's were built up of rings which were smeared over with clay so as to cover joints.

Ring building and direct method by hand, no trace of the wheel. In contrast to the exterior surface of the Banshan wares which are well polished and smoothed, the majority of the Ma ch'ang pottery appears dull, and is pitted with tiny holes. Very often-the surface was deliberately scratched with some hard substance. Fingermarks are also discernible on the scratched surface. Judging by the colour, the Ma ch'ang wares may have been fired at a lower temperature than that at which a Banshan ware would have been fired. A red wash was applied to the body before the black mineral pigment. Generally speaking the surface of the Ma ch'ang ware is less carefully finished than that of Banshan. The Ma ch'ang decoration followed the Banshan methods of execution and principles of arrangements; consequently the motifs are alike. It appears through analytical study that the Ma ch'ang wares derived from Banshan wares.



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1. Neolithic pottery in China has been a subject of much debate and controversy for over eighty years. Chinese archaeologists and historians have attempted to trace, primarily from pottery evidence; the racial, geographical and historical continuity of Chinese civilisation from the Neolithic age.
 2. The Gansu group, Andersson catagorised the finds from Gansu into six cultural groups namely; Banshan, ma-ch'ang, Ch'i-cha P'ing, Hsin Tien, Sha Cning and Ssu Wa