

# The Spread and Integration of Painted Pottery Art along the Silk Road

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**Abstract:** The Silk Road is a product of the mutual exchange of material culture and spiritual culture among ancient China and other countries, regions, and nations. It is the result of the contact and collision between Eastern and Western civilizations. Historically, the Silk Road served as a bridge of cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, closely linking ancient Chinese culture with the cultures of Central Asia, West Asia, and even ancient Siberian. In various areas along the Silk Road, all kinds of painted pottery art were integrated and developed.

**Keywords:** the Silk Road; cultural communication; painted pottery art

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## 1. Introduction

The concept of the Silk Road was first proposed by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen. He came to China seven times to investigate China's geography, politics and economy. He called the route of camel caravan in the western regions "Seidenstrassen". In 1911, Albert Hermann published the book *Die alten Seidenstrassen zwischen China und Syrien*, which directly adopted the title of "seidenstrassen (Silk Road)" by Richthofen. Since then, the word "Silk Road" has gradually become popular and become a universal geographical and cultural concept in the world.

The "Silk Road" mentioned by most people refers to a road of cultural exchange between the East and West, which was formed by silk trade after Zhang Qian's mission to the western regions. From the perspective of historical development, before the formation of the "Silk Road", frequent exchanges between Eastern and Western cultures have begun. The formation of the silk road has a long history. The Silk Road was not built overnight, but gradually formed. At the end of the Neolithic age, the painted pottery culture of the Central Plains spread to the western regions through the Hexi Corridor, and the cultural factors of Central Asia and Siberia also spread to the East.

## 2. Art Communication of Painted Pottery

The early cultural exchanges between the East and the West are mainly reflected in several aspects: first, in the late Neolithic period of painted pottery culture, the Yangshao culture (5000-3000 BC) from the Central Plains spread westward, which had a great impact on Majiayao culture (3000-2000 BC), and then continued to spread to Xinjiang and Central Asia through the transition of Hexi corridor. Secondly, the culture of painted pottery from Western Asia, Western Central Asia and Siberia spread eastward with the Western Asia or Indo European tribes. In the late Neolithic period and the early Bronze age, pottery, ornamentation and bronze culture with the characteristics of West Asia and Central Asia were introduced into Xinjiang, including Qijia Culture (2500-1500 BC), Siba culture (about 2000-1600 BC), Chawuhugoukou

culture (around 800-100 BC), Turpan Subeixi culture (1100 bc-100 BC) and other cultures.

From about 4000 BC, the painted pottery of Yangshao culture in China gradually developed westward, the late Yangshao culture, which moved to the west of Longshan, evolved into Majiayao culture. The discovery of Zhaobitan site in Jiuquan confirmed that the Yangshao-Majiayao culture moved westward, and proved that the cultural factors of Central Plains had advanced to the western end of Hexi Corridor from 3000 BC to 2500 BC.

Chinese painted pottery culture starts from the upper reaches of the Yellow River, passes through Gansu, Qinghai and Hami in Xinjiang, and reaches Turpan Basin. This culture did not stop after it arrived in Turpan Basin. According to the research and archaeological excavation of scholars in recent years, it continued to spread westward in two routes. One is through Alagou and other places in the Central Tianshan Mountains of Xinjiang, which entered the South Tianshan Road from 1200 BC to 800 BC, forming the Chawuhugoukou culture. Another route of transmission was westward along the green passage on the northern slope of the Tianshan Mountains, which entered the Ili region around 1000 BC, forming the painted pottery civilization in the Ili River Basin. According to the latest research results, from about 1000 BC to 500 BC, the painted pottery culture in the Ili River Basin continued westward and entered the East Bank of Balkhash Lake, becoming an important part of Saizhong and Wusun culture.

In Turkmenistan in the west of Central Asia, Anau culture and Namazga culture influenced by Dzheyton culture began to expand eastward with the migration of ethnic tribe. Around 3500 BC, the Afanasievo culture gradually developed in the eastern Ural region, and some tribes came from South to the northern part of Xinjiang. During the period from the beginning of 2000 BC to the beginning of 1000 BC, herdsmen from the Ural Mountains, South Siberia and Kazakh steppe regions in the northwest of Central Asia came to northern Xinjiang and the surrounding areas of the Tarim Basin, including the Andronovo culture and Saka culture.

Xinjiang painted pottery art mainly inherits the culture of the Central Plains, but also has the factors of West Asia, Central Asia and Siberia. Xinjiang painted pottery art is an important witness of the early cultural exchanges between the East and the West. In the early period of the "Silk Road", people from all over the ancient times and Eastern and Western cultures had begun various exchanges. We can trace the historical upper limit of the cultural exchanges between the East and the West to the late period of the painted pottery age and the early period of the bronze age.

### **3. Conclusions**

The development and prevalence of primitive painted pottery are mostly on the eve of the development of civilized society, or the transformation stage from simple society to complex society. Around 3500 B.C., painted pottery flourished in the Central Plains at the east and west ends of Eurasia, and civilization began to originate and gradually expand, forming the early Chinese civilization, as well as the early civilization of Central Asia Siberia. After the decline of painted pottery in the core area, words began to be used, and gradually formed a primary civilized society or a high-level tribal alliance. However, painted pottery continued to develop and spread in some places far away from the center of the cultural circle.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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