

# **Ceramic Technology: The Economic and Social Function of Early Ceramic Vessels in China**

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The production of ceramic artifacts is one of the most enduring technologies in human history. Ceramic technology played an important role in the economic life of early agricultural communities in Asia some 8,000 years ago and it is still an important part of our modern life, not only for the production of eating utensils but also as parts advanced machinery, armors, electronics and more. In recent years it became clear that the origins of this important technology are even earlier than what have been previously estimated. Currently, the earliest examples for the production of ceramic vessels are from East Asia, where they predate the actual transition to agriculture by some 10,000 years. This early use of ceramic technology is recognized as one of the unique characteristics of trajectories from hunting-gathering to agriculture in China, setting them apart from the better known trajectories such as that of the Levant. My paper will present evidence, from different parts of China and East Asia, for early ceramic production, and will address their socio-economic context and their short and long term effects on societies in these regions and beyond. Such discussion can shed light not only on the history of East Asian cultures but also help us better understand the economic, social and cultural place of one of humankind's most enduring technologies.