

Basic Detail Report



Teacup (Jian Zhan)

Date

960-1279 CE

Medium

Glazed ceramic

Description

This object is a teacup made during the Song dynasty. Its vernacular name, jian zhan, is composed of zhan (small

bowl) and jian, which indicates it came from Jian'an or Jianyang village, where this type of glazeware was invented. The fervor for specialized tea ceremonies began in the Song dynasty and marks the first emergence of ceremonial tea ware. Previously, wine vessels had been reused for tea. Elaborate tea competitions were practiced and enjoyed by everyone, from the elite to the poor. At this time, tea was ground into a fine powder and pressed into cakes. The cake was then dissolved into a cup with hot water and whisked, comparable to modern day matcha. The best tea was very frothy and white and maintained its foam, so blackware pottery was preferred because it provided the best visual contrast. The thickness of the bowl also retains heat and keeps the drink warmer longer. This cup's thin lines of black and brown glaze are a style called "hare's fur". The unique design is brought forth by the glaze reacting in the kiln due to varied levels of iron oxide on the surface, causing the excess oxygen to separate itself from the rest of the glaze and produces this striking pattern.

Dimensions

2 × 4 7/8 × 4 7/8 in. (5.1 × 12.4 × 12.4 cm)