

Basic Detail Report



Blackware dish with russet splashes

Date

c. 960-1279 C.E.

Primary Maker

Unknown artist, Chinese

Medium

Ceramic with black glaze

Description

"The momentous changes in the political, social, and economic landscape of China characterize the Song dynasty. From 960 to 1279, China experienced rapid industrial growth, the development of a nationwide market system, and sweeping government reforms

to centralize bureaucracy. Due to contested nature of China's northern borders, the dynasty transitioned from Northern Song to Southern Song after the Jurchen Jin dynasty gained control of northern China. The Southern Song empire reclaimed their capital as Hangzhou after this shift. The advancement of agricultural methods and increase in rice farming production made food abundant and revolutionized the economy. This economic boom and subsequent population increase made Hangzhou ripe for commerce. In the 12th and 13th century, Hangzhou transformed into a bustling metropolis home to over one million people. It is here at the massive markets of Hangzhou we locate the blackware bowl. The popularity of brewing tea in these bowls incited a surge in manufacturing or them to meet the growing demand. In turn, blackware ceramics became a staple of working to upper class households. During the Song Dynasty, tea continued to prove integral to Chinese culture. Zen Buddhist monks used tea to help them focus during meditation, as its spiritual quality facilitated a connection between the body and mind. Monks also developed tea brewing methods and practices that would then be propagated to the rest of the population. Commoners adopted these practices for everyday use, creating a desire for tools like blackware ceramics. Specifically, the whipped-tea method of brewing necessitated the use of blackware bowls. During the Tang Dynasty, the tea containing practice involved the act of turning tea cakes into powder form and then boiling this powder in a larger pot. The whipped-tea method developed in the Song Dynasty called for the tea maker to whip the powder from either tea cakes or tea dust and water until a layer of froth formed at the surface of the liquid. The tea maker would know to stop when the froth became vibrant white and the tea itself retained a rich green hue. Thus, the dark tones of the blackware bowls provided a perfect contrast to the intensity of the colors in the tea and also illuminated the quality of the tea maker's practice. Streaks and special markings mirroring hare's fur, tortoiseshell, and partridge feathers often accentuated the black glaze of these bowls. Ultimately, cultures around the world began to prize blackware tea bowls for their functionality and aesthetic value." (Written by Annelise Vought, Class of 2019)

Dimensions

Overall: 1 7/8 x 5 13/16 x 5 13/16 in. (4.8 x 14.8 x 14.8 cm)