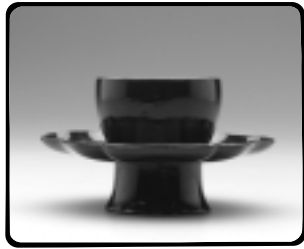




LOBED BOWL STAND

China • Black lacquer ware

Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279) • 79.150



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BLACK LACQUER WARE

SOUTHERN SONG DYNASTY (1127–1279)

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This elegant stand held a stoneware tea bowl that would sit inside the circular opening in the middle. Lacquer stands were among the tea items listed in the eighth-century *Book of Tea (Cha Jing)* by the tea connoisseur Lu Yu. This text claimed that a full appreciation of tea depended not only on the flavor but also on the colors and shapes of the tea items used.

During Lu Yu's time (728–804) lacquer stands were elaborately crafted with inlaid decorations of silver, gold, and mother-of-pearl. By the Song Dynasty, however, connoisseurs fostered the notion of "natural spontaneity," preferring simple, unadorned ceramics and tea accessories to showy or elaborate decoration. Stands were for the most part made of lustrous black lacquer without detailed embellishment, like the understated, undulating petal-shaped lobes of the saucer part of this stand. Single-colored lacquerwares were manufactured in workshops along the lower Yangzi River, where the lac tree could be cultivated.

During the Song, as in dynasties before, lacquer ware remained costly and was only affordable to the upper class. Although simple in outward appearance, manufacturing lacquer was extremely labor intensive. Many razor-thin layers of colored lacquer were applied to a core material, such as wood or leather. After each layer dried, it was polished. Lacquer added a durable protective coat that could be carved, engraved, painted, or inlaid. Lacquer ware has been in continuous use over the centuries and is valued as one of the most distinctive arts of Asia.