



## TEA BOWL

China • Stoneware with “hare’s fur” dark brown glaze; Jian ware, Shuiji kiln, Fujian Province  
Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127) • 62.18



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STONEWARE WITH “HARE’S FUR” DARK BROWN IRON GLAZE

JIAN WARE, SHUIJI KILN, FUJIAN PROVINCE

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One thousand years ago in China, tea was prepared by adding hot water to powdered tea leaves inside deep, thick-bodied bowls like this. The tea was then whisked into a frothy drink. Connoisseurs preferred foamy tea made from pale green, almost white tea leaves (*Jian cha*), grown in the southeastern province of Fujian, where this tea bowl was made. Rich brown-black ceramics were favored for the contrast they provided against the milky color of the whipped tea.

The thick melted glaze, pooled unevenly at the bottom of this bowl, is the distinctive trademark of Song Dynasty Jian ware. In addition to the dark lustrous color of the glaze, the tea bowls also featured mottled or streaked patterns such as the “hare’s fur” marking on this piece.

Scholars from Fujian who served at the imperial court during the 1100s promoted the tea and tea-drinking customs of this province. Emperor Huizong (ruled 1100–1125) wrote his masterly *Treatise on Tea* in 1107, made his own tea, and held tea contests. Competitors were judged on the taste, fragrance, and appearance of their teas.

Japanese monks who visited temples in southern China were introduced to whisked tea (which survives today in the Japanese tea ceremony) and brought home the much-admired Jian bowls known in Japan as **temmoku** wares.