

# Song Ceramics

## The Classical Age of Chinese Culture

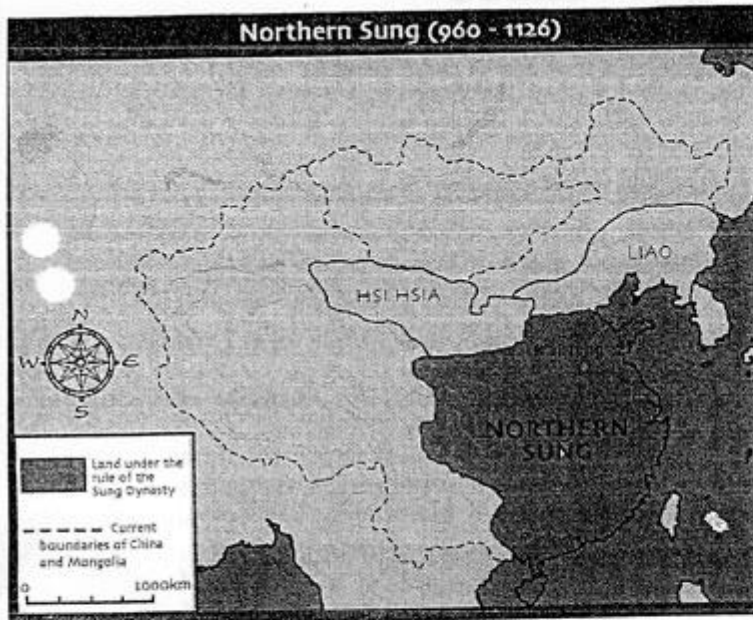
### An Introduction to the Song Dynasty

The overflowing and shifting Yellow river buried the civilisations of the Tang, Song and following dynasties several metres underground for over a thousand years. Archaeologists have been actively involved in excavating and discovering the ceramic supremacy and way of life during the Song dynasty for nearly a century. Archaeologists have discovered that the Song period was the Classical Age of Chinese culture. The Song Dynasty was founded in 960 when Emperor Taizu unified the country after the turbulence of the Five Dynasties period 906-960. Kaifeng served as the capital of the Five Dynasties and Northern Song period. The Song dynasty was a time of great intellectual activity and produced many of China's greatest poets, writers, historians, philosophers and artists. An interest in the past, particularly the collection of antiquities is typical of the whole Song dynasty. While Tang nobles engaged in physical activities like playing polo, Song scholars were only interested in learning and preserving their own intellectual life-style in the library.



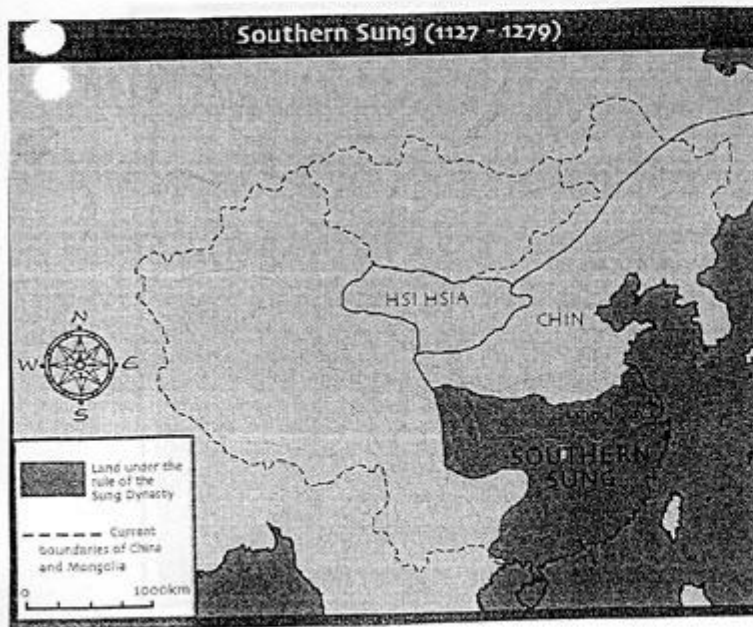
*Emperor Taizu - Song Dynasty*

The history of the Song dynasty is divided into two main phases, Northern Song (960-1127) and Southern Song (1127-1279). The division was caused by the forced abandonment of North China in 1127 when Song rule was crumbled due to the Jin dynasty. The Northern and Southern Song Dynasty survived a period of over three hundred years until 1279, when the Mongol Yuan dynasty destroyed the Song court's rule completely. These events occurred around one thousand to seven hundred years ago.



Emperors of the Northern Sung Dynasty  
北宋歷代皇帝世系表

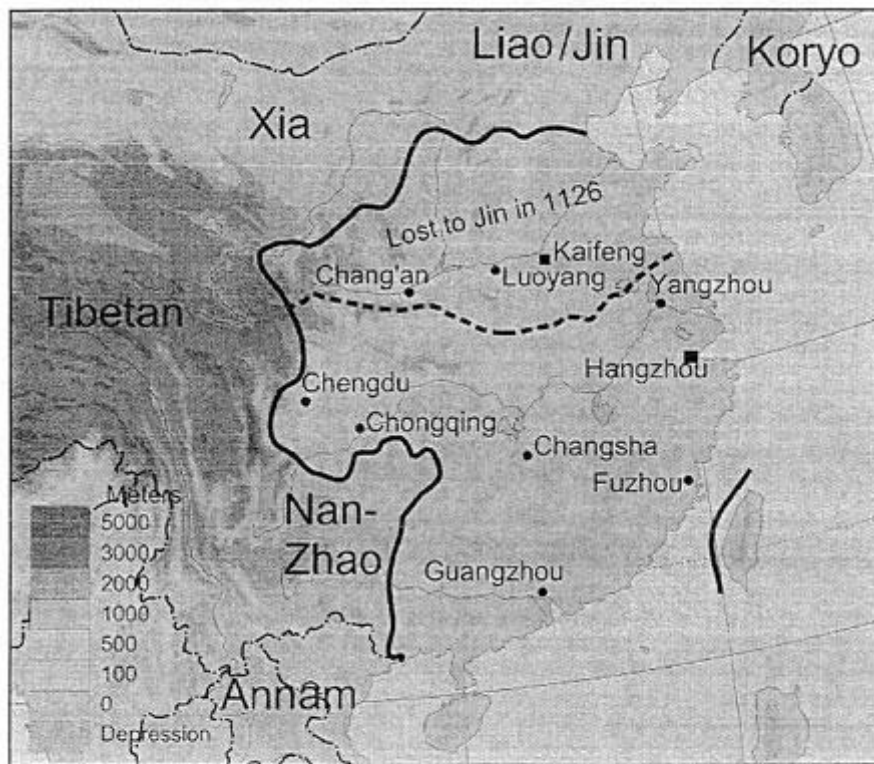
DATE 西元	Imperial Title 帝號	Personal Name 皇帝名
960 §	T'ai-tsu 太祖	Chao K'uang-yin 趙匡胤
976 §	T'ai-tsung 太宗	Chao Kuang-i 趙光義
979 §	T'ai-tsung 太宗	Chao Ling 趙靈
998 §	Chen-tsung 真宗	Chao Heng 趙恆
1023 §	Jen-tsung 仁宗	Chao Chen 趙禎
1064 §	Ying-tsung 英宗	Chao Shu 趙曙
1068 §	Shen-tsung 神宗	Chao Hsu 趙頊
1086 §	Ch'e-tsung 哲宗	Chao Hsu 趙煦
1101 §	Hui-tsung 徽宗	Chao Chi 趙佶
1126 §	Ch'in-tsung 欽宗	Chao Huan 趙桓
1127		



Emperors of the Southern Sung Dynasty  
南宋歷代皇帝世系表

DATE 西元	Imperial Title 帝號	Personal Name 皇帝名
1127 §	Kao-tsung 高宗	Chao Kou 趙構
1163 §	Hsiao-tsung 孝宗	Chao Shen 趙昀
1190 §	Kuang-tsung 光宗	Chao Tun 趙惲
1193 §	Ning-tsung 寧宗	Chao K'uo 趙擴
1225 §	Li-tsung 理宗	Chao Yun 趙昀
1263 §	Tu-tsung 度宗	Chao Ch'i 趙禔
1275 §	Kung-ti 恭帝	Chao Hsien 趙顯
1276 §	Tuan-tsung 端宗	Chao Shih 趙昀
1278 §	Ti-ping 帝昀	Chao Ping 趙昀
1280		

The Jin army sacked the Northern Song capital of Kaifeng. 1127 The Song court was forced to flee Kaifeng and set up capital at Hangzhou in Zhejiang province Emperor Huizong and family were taken hostage, Huizong's 9th son Zhaogou fled to the south ( known historically as Emperor Gaozong). The invasion of the Song empire began yet again in 1235 however was not completed until 1279, the date from which the Yuan dynasty is believed to begin, although the Mongols dated their Chinese Empire from 1263 when Kublai Khan mounted the throne and established his capital at Peking.



A map of Song dynasty China, showing the approximate borders of the Northern Song in 1100 and indicating the area lost to the non-Han Jin dynasty in 1127.

### **Beliefs during the Song Dynasty**

There was a revival of Confucianism during the Song period, known as Neo-Confucianism. The Song dynasty objects on display at the Burrell Collection were not made for religious purposes, craftsmen were generally concerned with Confucian philosophy. This renewed interest in the Confucian ideals and society of ancient times coincided with the decline of Buddhism, which the Chinese regarded as foreign and offering few practical guidelines for solutions. When Confucius died at the age of 73, some of his disciples put huts up beside his grave and lived in them for three years in mourning. Confucius (551-479 BC ), according to Chinese tradition, was a thinker, political figure, educator, and founder of the Ru school of Chinese thought. His teachings preserved in the analects form the foundation of how an individual should live his life and interact with others, and the forms of society and government in which he should participate. Song intellectuals sought answers to all philosophical and political questions in the Confucian Classics. Since Sui dynasty 581-617 civil service the exam questions were always based on a command of Confucian texts. Increased access to education and the expanded civil service examination system brought more scholars into government service than ever before.



## **Song Ceramic Trade and Influence on the Ceramic Culture of Foreign Lands**

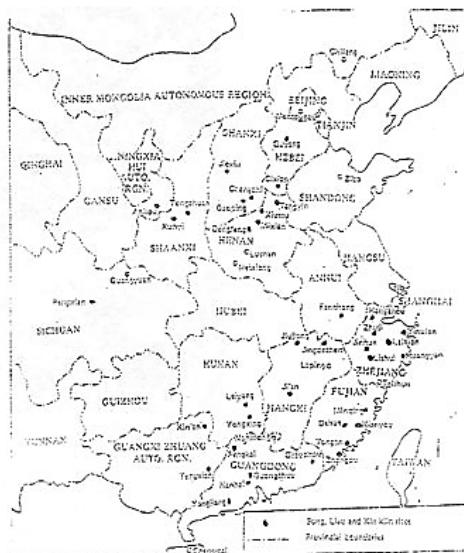
By 1100 Chinese cities numbered among the worlds largest. Cities during the Song Dynasty had huge markets that supplied the whole population. Merchant guilds developed the first letters of exchange, banks and credit businesses. Paper money was very widespread. The Song state was highly civil lead governmental system. In this period gunpowder, fireworks, printing and porcelain were invented. The true focus of economic wealth became more obviously centred to the South, which was more easily accessible to foreign trade through the ports of the South-Eastern coast. Shipping replaced the land routes and, so far as ceramics were concerned this was more profitable, as well as safer as an outlet to the world at large. Song merchants traded vessels on a larger scale than merchants of the Sui, Tang and Five Dynasties. Stone monuments were erected near quite a number of Song dynasty porcelain kilns, some of these by porcelain merchants. Inscriptions on the monuments recorded the activities of merchants who engaged exclusively in transporting porcelain to distant regions for sale and were known as 'porcelain merchants'. To advertise their wares, certain workshops stamped their porcelain vessels with exclusive inscriptions in the nature of a trade mark. Vessels of the Cizhou ware were often inscribed as 'Made by the Zhang family' , 'Made by the Shen family'. A considerable number of vessels were decorated with dragon and phoenix patterns. But the strict social rank system of feudal society barred their use to ordinary citizens, and even officials and nobles.

### **Song Ceramics**

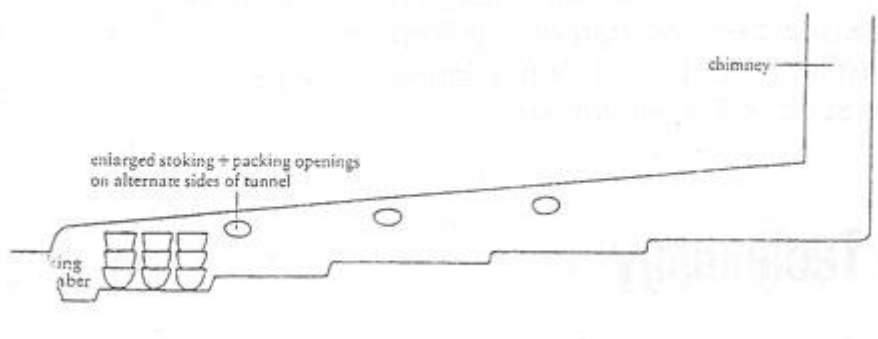
There are many different types and styles of pottery that come under the heading of Song ceramics. The first is Porcelain, which consists of a pure white clay body, covered with a clear glaze and high fired at over 1200 degrees Celsius. Northern Song dynasty Ding Kilns began to perfect a creamy porcelain with an ivory appearance that continued to be produced into the Jin period. 1115-1234. There is a marked difference between the wares made during the Northern Song dynasty and the later wares of the Southern Song. During the 11th century Persian influence declined, no longer were designs influenced by metal work but became ceramic in form and feeling. The masterpieces of the N.Song reflect the spirit of Confucianism whilst those of the Southern Song embody the spirit of Zen Buddhism.

### **Kiln Technology**

Kiln sites produced a variety of objects, including many kinds of bowls and plates as well as boxes, ink slabs, pillows ( head rests ) which were created using a wide range of techniques from painting and carving to stamping and moulding. Coal mining was a well-developed technique in the Song dynasty, and all the Song dynasty kilns in the north were located in coal-producing areas.



The Northern kilns made rapid advances in their technology that placed them ahead of the south-eastern kilns, which for so long had held the lead. The potters in the north were imaginative in their use of material and showed strong initiative in the development of decorative techniques. The Northern provinces were not able to take full advantage of their opportunities to build up overseas trade and work towards industrialization was due to two factors: the threat of invasion, to which the area was constantly subject, and the geographical and geological situation, which was unalterable. These factors, combined with the problems involved in political and economic changes from the end of the T'ang to the new period of unity under the Yuan Mongols, inevitably had an impact on the whole northern region and resulted in the shift of the major centres of production to the south, which already in T'ang times had begun to become the more important economic area of the empire. Northern Song Dynasty kilns kiln group began to develop its own characteristic style with raised designs and a pale bluish-green glaze. The northern kilns during the first period of about three and half centuries are regarded as classic wares. Commonly known as the Ding style. In South and Central China where wood fuel was used, kilns were constructed on the slope of a hill to ensure a forced draft and thus to fire the pots by a reduction process. In South China the clay was applied directly to the clay body and then fired. Dragon kilns : 50 to 80 metres long yielded close to 10,000 bowls and other vessels at one firing.



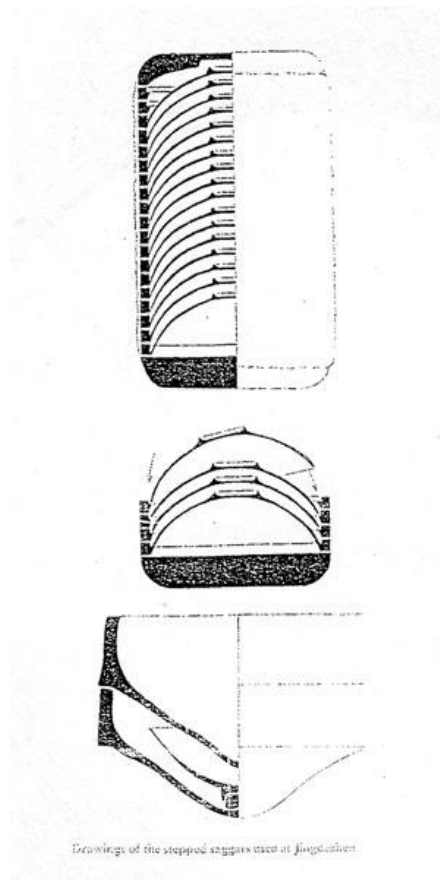
Northern Sung Yueh ware kiln site, Chang-tzu-shan,  
Shang-yü-hsien, Chekiang.  
浙江上虞縣帳子山北宋越窯遺址

## Northern Song Official Wares

The wealthy patronage of the arts in the first two centuries following the fall of Tang was mainly in the north, which, up to the twelfth century at least, remained predominant over the south in both invention and quality. It is for this reason that the ceramics made at some of the northern kilns during the first part of this period of about three and a half centuries are regarded as 'classic' wares and have been esteemed highly by the Chinese.

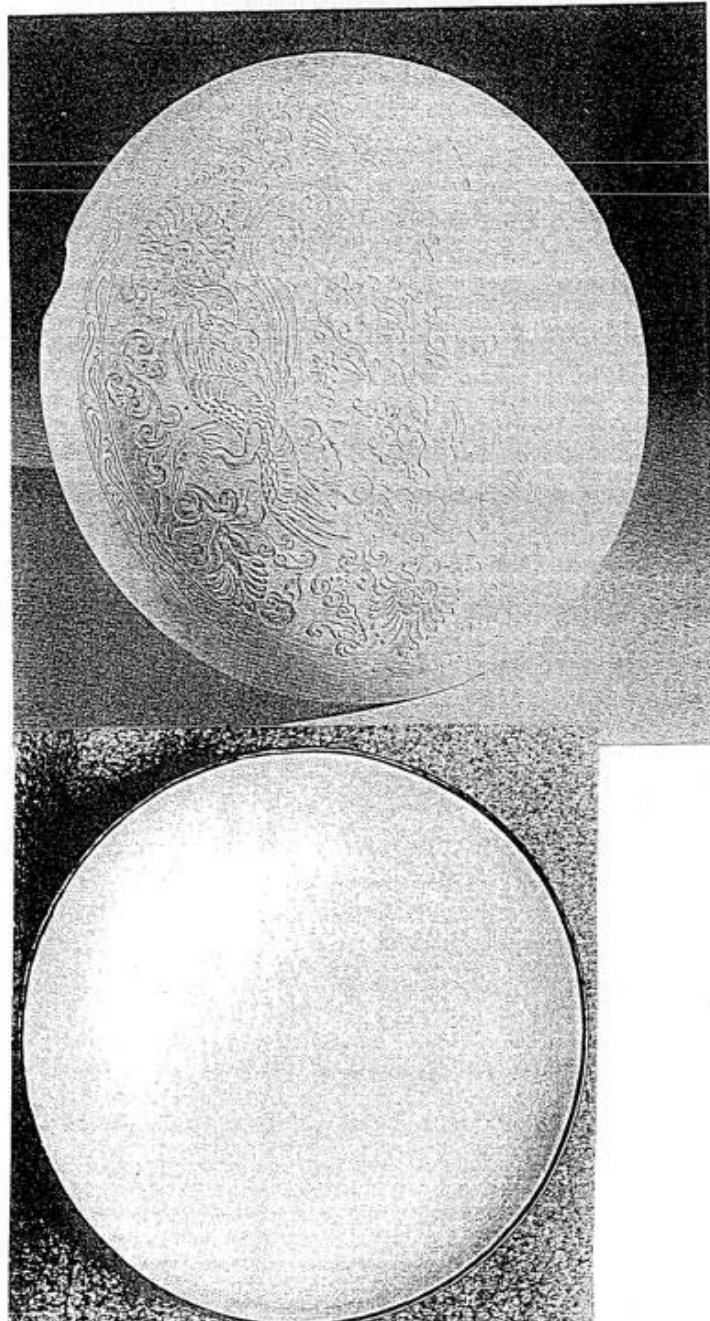
### Ding Ware

Classic Ding wares- found favour with the courts of the Northern Song and Jin Dynasties. Ding ware was made of fine, white, durable white clay. The body was soft and thin and the vessels were regular in shape and evenly glazed. Firing turned the white glaze slightly yellow, resulting in a subdued ivory white ware. Archaeological investigation, The Ko Lu Yao Lun states about ancient ding ware, 'Of ancient Ding ware, specimens with a fine paste and white and lustrous glaze are valuable—Genuine pieces have 'tear drops' on the outside. The best have incised designs; the second best are plain; and of third quality are those with very elaborate patterns.' Tear drops refer to the thick globs of glaze of a brownish colour formed on the underside of the Ding ware where the glaze has been left to dry whilst the pot lay at an angle on its side. The Ding kilns used the new technique of stacking porcelain vessels during firing to increase input. As the vessel mouth-rims could not be glazed they stuck to the pads between the vessels and became rejects, Ding mouth-rims were generally unglazed and rough. But the royal family, high-ranking officials and nobles were unwilling to use such vessels, so potters smoothed the mouth rims with gold, silver or copper rings, making the Ding white porcelain even more costly.



Ding porcelain decoration was applied by incising, engraving and impressing patterns, as well as by moulding. Tools shaped like fine bamboo slips were used to incise curves when the clay was still fairly soft. Impressed designs were fairly prevalent on the vessels of the late Northern Song, the designs were engraved on the moulds and impressed on the vessels in the course of shaping them.

Fig. 73. Stoneware mould with decoration carved intaglio; dated on the back to A.D. 1184. Diameter 22 cm. London, Percival David Foundation.



## Yaozhou Ware

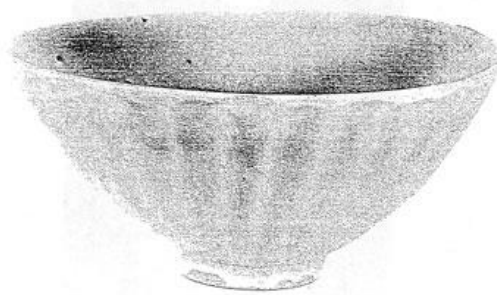
Nearly all the Yaozhou shapes are thrown, however those made with moulded decoration were made using a turn-table and paddle to beat the clay over the mould. The use of the fast wheel doesn't occur in Yaozhou ware. The Yaozhou ware are larger in scale and very deeply and sharply cut into the heavy grey stoneware moulds, so that the finished bowls and dishes nearly always look as though they have been carved. Many books state that Yaozhou wares were carved this is due to the fact that moulds were discarded and have been found during excavations. Late Northern Song period, the Yaozhou kilns began to produce pale olive coloured celadons with mould impressed designs.



## **Southern Song Official Ware**

### **Longquan Ware**

Longquan ware represented a great school of southern celadon arising in the Song dynasty. Archaeologists investigating Longquan celadon producing areas discovered the sites of 150 plus porcelain kilns and workshops. Longquan celadon has a slightly opaque glaze caused by tiny bubbles in the glaze and also the presence of plant ash.

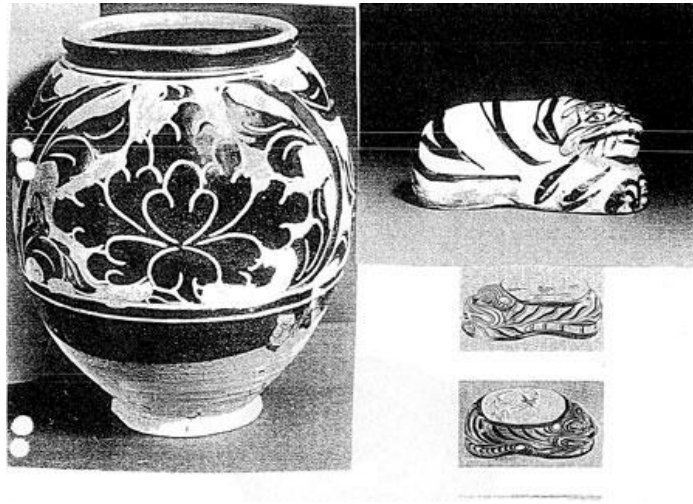


### **Guan Ware**

Porcelain school of Guan ware consisted of several porcelain kilns run by the Song Imperial court in Kaifeng and in Hangzhou. Guan means official.

### **Cizhou ware**

Is the only painted ware to carry on the Tang tradition. It is indeed folk art and it is distinct from the official and imperial wares made for the court. Northern ceramics tended to be more powerful in form and most vigorous in decoration.



## Black Tea Wares

During the Song Dynasty the demand for pottery porcelain vessels and utensils for tea drinking greatly increased, spurring porcelain production. For centuries, the ritual of preparing and serving tea has held a special place in the hearts and minds of Chinese aristocracy, court officials, intellectuals and poets. The tea ceremony is not related to a religion.

North and South China during the Song dynasty, North Henan black wares 10th -14th century- body first covered by a thick black slip, sloppy clay and water mixture- containing quite a lot of iron oxide and then glazed with a transparent brown glaze with less iron oxide. The attractive speckled glaze was achieved by using a period of reduction towards the end of firing.

### Four Main Types of Tea Bowl

**Gaibei- lidded cup**

**Wen xiang bei- for smelling the fragrance of tea**

**Cha bei - cup for drinking tea from**

**Chawan- bowl used for drinking tea**

Hares fur glaze 11th -14th Century - tea bowls taken back to Japan by Zen Buddhist monks.

## Jizhou ware

This design has been produced by using paper-cuts, the paper- cut was stuck directly on the body which then had an iron oxide glaze applied. Then the piece was fired in a reducing atmosphere so that the carbons in the paper were left in the glaze to produce a dark- brown or black design against a speckled, fairly pale glaze. The tortoise shell effect on the outside of the bowl was achieved by applying a yellow glaze over a black one.



by Emma May