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| *BACKGROUND* |
| YiXing (pronounced ee-shing) teapots first appeared during the Sung Dynasty (960-1279) in the YiXing region of China, located in the Jiangsu province, about 120 miles northwest of Shanghai. The Jiangsu province is the world's only source for the unique clay from which YiXing teapots are made, called purple or red clay. YiXing teapots were relatively unknown for many years until the late Ming Dynasty (1600s) when their use and production began to flourish. Demand from Europe and throughout China fueled an active industry in which many artists developed their craft to high levels of mastery. For the next three hundred years, YiXing teapots attained renown throughout China and Europe. Although the Europeans strove to imitate the YiXing teapots, they could not compete with the unique purple clay only found near YiXing, China.  |
| *PURPLE CLAY (ZISHA)*Purple clay's unique properties make it ideal for brewing tea. The quality most immediately apparent is the attractive color of purple clay. This color, sometimes augmented by natural pigments, is never hidden on YiXing teapots by glazes. Similarly, the inside of YiXing teapots are always left uncoated. The porous nature of purple clay absorbs the flavor, smell, and color of the tea that is brewed in it. Over time, YiXing teapots develop a seasoning from repeated use, making the tea brewed from a well used teapot a special treat. For this reason, most people will dedicate a single flavor of tea to a specific YiXing teapot, so that the seasoning is not disrupted by cross-brewing.  |
| *SIZE* |
| People from the US and Europe today are often surprised by the size of YiXing teapots. Most Westerners are more familiar with large teapots that are used to brew tea for numerous people at a time. Although there are certainly plenty of larger teapots for social brewing, YiXing teapots are intended for individual use, producing 1-2 servings of tea. For this reason, the Chinese historically would carry their own personal YiXing teapot and drink directly from its spout, although this is less common today.  |