



7069 Aoki Mokubei (1767-1833)

A ceramic te-aburi (hand warmer) with a reticulated silver cover

The body is decorated with seventeen Rakan (saintly ascetics) incised and painted in coloured enamels.

All are seated wearing loosely fitting robes, a halo surrounds each of their shaved heads and some hold alms bowls whilst a few rest on straw mats.

Signed: Bunsei Kanoetora* shugetsu Rōbei zō. (Made by Rōbei during an autumn month in the year 1830 of the Bunsei period)

Seals:

Right, upper: undeciphered

Left, lower: Mokubei stamped upside down

Japan 19th century Edo period *1830

Dimensions: H. 30.5cm x Diam. 35.5cm (12½" x 14")

Awasebako (fitted box) inscribed:

Lid: Te-aburi (hand warmer)

Label on box lid: Mokubei zo. Jyūroku rakan bori tsubo. Ryōro. Yonju yon go (Made by Mokubei. A hand warmer carved with the design of The Sixteen Rakan. Number 44)

Lid interior: Jyūroku rakan te-aburi. Genjū Kyokuken Zuidai, kiyo Aoki Mokubei jisaku Jokoan jūbutsu (Sixteen Rakan hand warmer. This piece, made by Aoki Mokubei, was donated to the Jokoin Temple.

Written by the current abbot Kyokuken Zuidai.

Aoki Mokubei (1767-1833). Gō (art names): Hyakuroku Sanjin, Kokikan, Kukurin, Mokubei, Rōbei, Teiunrō. A nanga (literati painting) painter, potter, calligrapher and scholar, he is also considered the reviver of Kyoto ceramics. Born in Kyoto the son of a restaurant owner, he studied pottery under Okuda Eisen (1753-1811) and was influenced by the Chinese paintings of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties as well as by Ike no Taiga (1723-1776).

After reading Tōsetsu (Ceramics Explained), a Chinese treatise of 6 chapters on the history of Chinese ceramics written in 1774 by Chu Yen, he decided to specialise in this art form gaining great recognition and fame during his own lifetime.

In 1801 he worked for the Lord of Kii as a potter and then in 1807 joined the service of the Lord of Kaga, where he opened the Kasugayama kiln. In 1806 Mokubei visited the Kutani kilns spurring the potters on to do better work. In 1808 he was called into the service of Prince Shoren'in no Miya who sponsored the founding of a kiln in Awata, Kyoto where he began to work as an imperial ceramic master.

His ceramics are rich in elements associated with the literati, China, and the sencha tea ceremony leading him to produce numerous teapots, freely potted stoneware tea bowls and cooling hearths. Mokubei mastered both Chinese and Japanese ceramic techniques such as iroe (polychrome over glaze enamels), sancai (Chinese three-colour ware), sometsuke (underglaze blue), seiji (celadon), K'ang-hsi famille noire and the so called kōchi ware (polychrome). He also made Korean and Japanese style pieces which were popular among matcha devotees.

The sheer range of Mokubei's work attracted many clients and influential patrons even though he was known for his low rate of production. It is said that clients and dealers paid large sums for his work and

yet often had to wait years for their order to be completed.

Rakan are Buddhist disciples who having conquered all passions are liberated from the burden of rebirth. They are said to have originally numbered twelve hundred but in various types of Japanese artistic representations a smaller group of sixteen rakan is the focus. Following Chinese tradition each member of this

group is individually named and associated with a particular attribute such as a fly whisk, a gong, a scroll, a palm-leaf book or a dragon. Rakan are usually depicted with shaved heads, long earlobes and unadorned draped robes leaving one shoulder bare.

Works by the artist can be found in the collections of: the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Kyoto National Museum of Art, Kyoto; Freer and Sackler, the Smithsonian's Museum of Modern Art, Washington D.C.; Tokyo National Museum of Art, Tokyo; The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Accompanying paper notes:

Envelope: Mokubei tesube kanteisho zaichu (Authentication of the work by Mokubei enclosed)

Inner envelope slip: Yonjyū yongo, Miyagawa o hansho tomoni nitsu, kanteisho, copy (A copy of the two-sheet authentication number 44, written by Miyagawa Kōsai potter).

The original authentication is also included.

Accompanying note 1st page: Akashi. Ichi Rakuyaki tetsubachigata teaburi. Migi, Mokubei o ga jyūrokurakan chokokuni saishiki wo kuwae, yoni marenaru toki seisaku. Shoshin machigainakiya. Meiji yojoyūyo nen ***gatsu. Toshi Miyagawa Kōsai. (Authentication. One Rakuyaki style hand warmer in the shape of an iron bowl. Made by the old man Mokubei with a Sixteen Rakan carved design and painted in colour. This is a rare piece of pottery and undoubtedly an authentic work by Mokubei. Date: Meiji 41 (1908), Potter Miyagawa Kōsai)

Seals:

Right, upper: Part of the seal Jussui Goseki; a seal used by the Miyagawa Kōsai kiln

Left, lower seal: Miyagawa Zen'ō

2nd page: Mokubei o saku. Rakan ga tetsubachi-gata te-aburi. Kore Raku-yaki to shite o ga ginou wo yo

ni shimesaru mono nari toho no giichi to shite nasazarunaki o wa kotsudatsu share tenpu no saino wo Rakuyaki no togi ni oyo shitarumono. O no tagi kyotan no hoka nashi. Keishiki yoku totonoi juuroku-rakan no gaho keimyū ni shite in ari, shikashite takumini shikisai wo hodokoshi-taraba giryo mata fujo Rakuyaki no oyobasaru tokoro nari. Kore Bunsei Kanoē-tora to areba Bunsei no matsunen Tenpo to kaigen arishi toshi nari. O bannen no saku nari. Hako ni Jokoin jubutsu to ari. Kore o ga Joko-in no tame ni tsukuri taruya mata yojinga Joko-in e zorashiki no meihin nari. Joko-in wa Kennin-zenji tattoo matsuji nari. Dated: Meiji 41st year. Miyagawa Kosai jutsu, with seal Miyagawa Kosai. Arisawa Chuhei ki with seal Chuhei

(Made by the old man Mokubei, a hand warmer in the shape of an iron bowl with the design of Sixteen Rakan. This is Raku ware made by Mokubei to demonstrate his exceptional pottery skills. He has achieved the utmost technical supremacy and his character, wit and ingenuity are exceptional, applying his pottery skills in this example of Raku ware. His tremendously versatile technical skill is really astounding; the shape of this work is extremely fine, and the drawing and colouring of the Sixteen Rakan is light and elegant. This work dates from the year of Kanoē tora, which is the last year of the Bunsei era and the first year of the Tenpo era. Therefore, the work dates from later in his working life. The hakogaki inscription says it is a treasure at the Jokoin Temple, which might mean that either Mokubei made this work for the Temple or it was donated by the artist to the Temple. Such a fine work. The Jokoin Temple is one of the sub-temples attached to the Ken'nin-ji Zen Temple (Kyoto). Inscribed by: Miyagawa Kōsai.

Seals:

Left, lower: Miyagawa Kōsai (1845-1922) and Arisawa Chūhei (dates unknown).





