



7329            A bronze hanging kōro (incense burner) in the form of two saru (gibbons), each reaching for a single fruit of kaki (persimmon) on a branch with their a long, slender arms.

Japan 19th century Edo period

Dimensions: H. 32" x W. 3¾" x D. 4" (81cm x 9.5cm x 10cm)

Macaques once inhabited much of Japan and their interactions with humans were frequent. Saru (monkey) thus became a natural focus of the local folklore and religion. As illustrated by one of the many sacred Shinto myths the Japanese held saru in high regard. In the ancient texts of Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters, 711AD), when the sun goddess Amaterasu sent her grandson Ninigi no Mikoto down from heavens to rule Japan, the grandson was met midway by an escort deity named Sarutahiko no

Mikoto (prince monkey). This deity is generally considered to be connected to the monkey and as an escort deity it is known as a guardian of roads, travellers and guidance.

With the transition from the medieval period to the early feudal era in Japan, the monkey's religious significance declined while its reputation grew for being clever and mischievous as well as deceitful and conniving.

Although only the macaque is native to Japan, it is often the slender-armed, graceful gibbon of China that is depicted in Japanese art. This is especially true in art inspired by Zen tradition and Chinese exemplars.

n.b. This piece is accompanied by a paper note which states: Mutsuke Kyūzō (Owned by the Mutsu Family).

The Mutsu family served under the Tokugawa clan of Kishū in present day Wakayama. Munemitsu Mutsu (1844-1897) was the minister for Foreign Affairs and concluded the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation in 1894