



Chinese export porcelain famille rose holy water stoupe

Qianlong period circa 1760

European Market

Height: 8¼ inches; 21cm

A very rare Chinese export porcelain famille rose holy water stoupe or font and cover, the back plate decorated with peony and the basin and cover of ribbed form.

Such fonts or stoupes are intended to hold small quantities of holy water, usually with a sponge, for people to dip their fingers in before making the sign of the cross. They were often placed at the entrances to churches or holy sites.

The form is known in delftware, faïence and metalwork but is rare in Chinese export porcelain. Dias 1996, suggests that the presence of a lid means it was probably for private use rather than in a church. A pair of the same type and decoration as this is in the Museu da Fundação Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva, Lisbon. A few examples are known in blue and white of similar shape, marked IHS to the back

plate, for the Jesuits.

References: Antunes 2000, p55, No 39, a pair identical to this example, in the collection of Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva, also published Antunes 1999, p91; Dias 1996, p52-3, discussion of such pieces; Sargent 2012, p310, a blue and white example in the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem MA (AE85322.ab) purchased from Cohen & Cohen in 1996 and reference to a second example in the museum (E82867) purchased from Cohen & Pearce in 1990; a fragment of a blue and white back plate, now in the Bangkok National Museum, Thailand, was excavated in 1984 from San Petro, a Dominican church destroyed by the Burmese in 1767, at Ayutthaya, a former Portuguese settlement; Cohen & Cohen 2014, No 22, a further blue and white example; Sapage, 1992, cat 24, a blue and white example of different shape with back-plate in the form of a crucifix, and inscribed IHS; Pinto de Matos 2011, Vol 3, p194, No 492, a blue and white cruciform stoupe.