



**A PAIR OF CHINESE FAMILLE ROSE DISHES OF LARGE SIZE
POA**

Each of circular form, richly enamelled and gilt in the famille rose palette, painted to the centre with a pair of Mandarin ducks with colourful plumage swimming amongst towering lotus, lily pads, and aquatic plants, encircled by a band of pink diaper pattern to the cavetto with four reserved cartouches and further decorated with flower heads, the wide rim painted with a continuous scene of The Eight Daoist Immortals with their attributes riding amongst turbulent waves: Li Tieguai is depicted astride his magic gourd and holding a lingzhi aloft; Cao Guo Qiu is shown upon a yellow horse and bearing castanets; Zhongli Quan clutches an enormous gilt peach; Lan Caihe rides a kylin and has a flower basket over their back; Zhang Guolao is depicted with his You Gu bamboo drum; the fairy He Xiangyu is shown paddling a canoe; Li Dongbin sits on a gnarled raft branch; and Han Xiangzi rides a kylin, the reverse decorated with four iron red peony blooms, the base glazed.

Period: Yongzheng /early Qianlong, circa 1730-1740

Footnote: Mandarin ducks are referred to in Chinese as yuanyang, where yuan and yang respectively stand for male and female mandarin ducks. In traditional Chinese culture, mandarin ducks are believed to be lifelong couples, unlike other species of ducks. Hence they are regarded as a symbol of conjugal affection and fidelity, and are frequently featured in Chinese art.

A pair of mandarin ducks and lotus is especially auspicious. A word for lotus in Chinese, he, is a homophone for the word for harmony, while another word for lotus, lian, is homophonous to a word meaning successive. So the lotus combined with a pair of mandarin ducks, which symbolises fidelity, form an appropriate wedding motif wishing the couple a harmonious marriage blessed by the birth of many illustrious sons.

The Immortals

Zhang Guolao (7th/8th century CE) was a recluse who had supernatural powers of magic such as rendering himself invisible. He is usually depicted with a white mule which he rode backwards over great distances, and, when not required was folded away and put in his wallet. When he wished to resume his travels, he squirted some water on the wallet and the mule at once appeared. His emblem is a You Gu, a kind of musical instrument in the shape of a bamboo tube or drum with two rods to beat it.

Li Tieguai is represented as a beggar leaning on an iron staff with a pilgrim's gourd. Due to his magic powers he spent much time in spirit in the celestial regions, leaving his body, apparently dead, in charge of his disciple. Once when he was absent longer than usual, having to go and take care of his sick mother, his servant decided that his master was really dead this time and buried the body. When the soul of Li Tieguai returned, he found that he had no body into which to enter, so he entered the body of the first good person he could find, a lame beggar. His emblem is a gourd which is said to contain all kinds of magical cures.]

Zhongli Quan, Zhou dynasty, 1122-249 B.C., chief of the Eight Immortals, who had the secret of the elixir of life and powers of transmutation, is depicted as a fat man sometimes holding a peach in his hand and always grasping his emblem, a fan, which is said to be capable of resuscitating the souls of the dead.

Li Dongbin, circa 750 A.D., a scholar or recluse, he learned the secrets of Daoism from Zhongli Quan. He is the patron saint of the barbers and is also worshipped by the sick and is able to rid the world of evils. His emblem is a sword which is used for dispelling evil spirits.

Cao Guo Qiu, 930-999 A.D., son of a military commander and brother of the Empress Cao of the Song Dynasty. He is patron saint of the theatrical profession. His emblem, the castanets, which symbolise revival, are said to be derived from the court tablet, authorising free access to the palace, to which he is entitled owing to his birth.

Han Xiangzi is credited with the power of making flowers grow and blossom instantaneously. His emblem is the flute and he is the patron saint of musicians. He wandered the country charming the birds and the beasts with his music. He had no idea of the value of money, and when given any he used to scatter it on the ground.

Lan Caihe, 700 - 800 A.D. Various sources stated to have been a woman and a hermaphrodite. She is represented as dressed in a long gown, she wandered the country waving a wand and denouncing this fleeting life and its delusive pleasures. Her emblem is the flower basket which she carries, and