

# SHOKUNIN

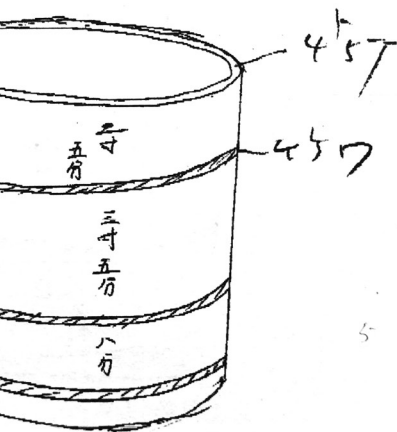
PRESERVING TRADITION,  
EVOLVING, EMERGING

木工芸  
中川

NAKAGAWA MOKKOGUJI

since 1873

**Kaikado**



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2. 1. 1877 32 18



### **Shokunin**

“The Japanese word *Shokunin* is defined by both Japanese and Japanese-English dictionaries as ‘Craftsman’ or ‘Artisan’, but such a literal description does not fully express the deeper meaning. The Japanese apprentice is taught that *Shokunin* means not only having technical skills, but also implies an attitude and social consciousness. ...The *Shokunin* has a social obligation to work his/her best for the general welfare of the people. This obligation is both spiritual and material, in that no matter what it is, the *Shokunin's* responsibility is to fulfill the requirement.”

— Toshio Odate



(Top) Tin Long 200g

(Bottom) Copper wie 200g 40years old, Tin long 400g 100years old

## Shokunin - Preserving tradition, Evolving, Emerging

Japan is a country, rich in culture and art. Master craftsmen have forged some of the best pieces in the world as well as some of the most delicate and beautiful, yet practical daily use items for our lives. This is a country that perfected the art of flower arrangement and tea ceremony. There are also many not so well known works but each and every one is perfected by a *Shokunin*. The Japanese word "Shokunin" has been defined as a craftsman or artisan creating highly distinctive products using traditional methods, whether this be handmade or through the implementation of current technologies. *Shokunin* must create using their experience and intuition to carry on traditional techniques to the future while always considering and respecting the past but also must be ready to adapt to the present.

The life of a *Shokunin* is not easy and they face various obstacles. One of these challenges is whether or not they will be able to pass down their knowledge and experience to future generations and an even bigger problem for *Shokunin*, in today's world is sustainability. It is a time when *Shokunin* must adapt to the world they live in. In today's 21st century, we have technologies where we are all connected by the Internet and bullet trains, have smart phones and electric cars; it is the time for the "Progressive Shokunin."

The Progressive Shokunin will be socially conscious of his roots and what he is creating, but will not be held back by the idea of preserving tradition. His creations will circle the world where people will realize the meaning of having something created by a *Shokunin* rather than a 3D printer, his creations will be respected and revered by all that can appreciate the beauty of tradition and, most of all, his creations will evolve to meet the demands of our generation.

Takahiro and Shuji are two such Progressive Shokunin. Takahiro is the 6th generation successor of Kaikado, a compa-

ny established in 1875 creating handmade “Chazutsu” or tea caddies. He had the idea of creating a two-tiered tea caddy and while always maintaining tradition, has his sights on the global market. Shuji, the 3rd generation successor is quite well-known for making “Ki-oke” buckets that are made with wooden slats, held together with precisely placed metal rings. This process dates back 700 years, but Shuji has found new and interesting products that can be made using his traditional techniques.

The knowledge that both Takahiro and Shuji possess did not come easily. It may take years of constant repetition and for some people, a lifetime, to acquire the skills to continue their heritage. This passing on of technique and information cannot be taught in words. It must be acquired through rigorous training where every single action is physically and spiritually learned by their bodies. They both maintain their original production philosophies but have changed their approach. Takahiro still maintains the stringent handmade quality of his *Chazutsu* while changing the way it is promoted in the world and sharing it in various collections and museums. Shuji uses computers to calculate how his product will react to a different humidities in various parts of the world as well as creating new products that might be more appealing to world markets. The path has not changed, nor has their thinking but they’ve both realized that something must be modified so that their traditional artforms will survive themselves.

It is the time of the Progressive Shokunin. Takahiro and Shuji yearn to achieve. They love what they do and are ready to give their lives to their work. They are ready to accept change in their futures, while preserving tradition. They are ready to share their ideas and yours. Will you share in their future?



(Top) Champaign cooler KONOHA

(Bottom) Vase SUIBAN



Kaikado

別造中蓋形

別造



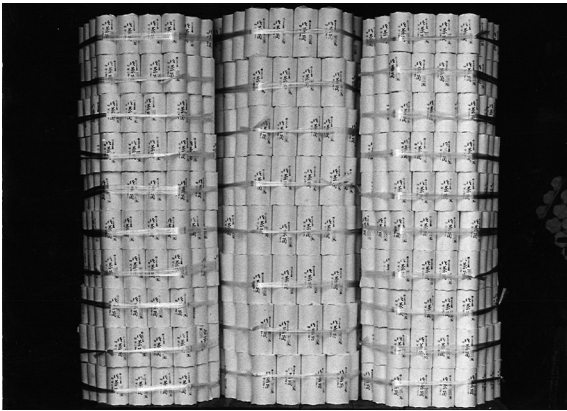
Kaikado, established in 1875 shortly after Japan opened its doors to the rest of the world. In the Edo era, canisters made from tin were commonly used as storage for tea, as were jars made from china or earthenware. Kaikado's founder, Seisuke, first designed a tin *Chazutsu* (a tea caddy) and made it into a commercially available item. His aim was to provide a well-designed, functional tea caddy capable of storing the type of tea leaves commonly sold by dealers. In a time before the invention of the refrigerator, air tightness was key to maintaining the flavour and quality of freshly picked leaves for a period of one year, and Kaikado's tea caddies were a blessing in disguise to tea dealers.

A manufacturing process that involves anywhere between 130 to 140 steps, the hand-made tea caddies have virtually remained true to their original designs established by Kaikado's founding generation. The die and mold used in the early years of the company are still in use today. The current successor, Takahiro, developed a two-tiered tea caddy. He initiated the first ever collaborations with tea brands, and has started marketing his caddies abroad. Whilst always maintaining tradition, Takahiro set his sights on the global market. Adding a new element per generation is a tradition that Kaikado has carried on throughout its history.

Kaikado



Kaikado



(Previous) Family photo over three generations  
(Top) Conceded to the Emperor  
(Bottom) Delivered style in old time



Nakagawa Mokkougei



Nakagawa Mokkaugei is best known for producing *Ki-oke*, Japanese buckets using traditional methods that were passed on from father to son. Their practices that date back 700 years to the Muromachi era became extremely popular in the Edo era when virtually every household had various buckets for baths or keeping items like rice or *miso*. The tradition of using such buckets has dwindled over the years so Shuji Nakagawa, the current successor, has evolved his techniques and uses them to create modern day items such as champagne coolers and beautiful artistic items to decorate your home. His exquisite technique allows him to construct beautiful wooden containers using wooden slats held together by metal rings without the use of a single nail. He has started production of his products for various world markets and has begun to rely on technology to make sure his products are viable in various global environments.



(Left) Grandfather: Kameichi and Father: Kiyotsugu  
(Right) Father: Kiyotsugu and Shuji





Takahiro Yagi | Shokunin/Director  
Nakagawa Shuji | Shokunin

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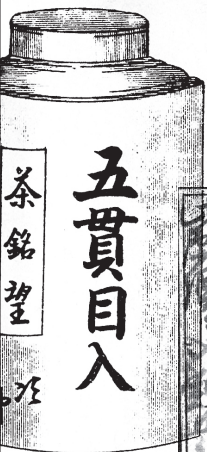
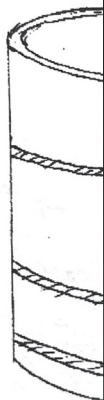
指瘦シ

上一尺

下九寸五分

高廿八寸

板厚四分半



五貫目入

茶銘望

正

正味  
原價表  
生正味  
原價表  
茶銘望  
正