



根付研究會

NETSUKE KENKYUKAI

Study Journal
Volume 2, Number 3, 1982





A glorious portrayal of Shoki and oni by the famed Tokoku. This is the largest effort ever recorded by this master. Wood with various inlays of pearls, ivory, lacquer, silver, and gold. Signed *Tokoku* with seal *Bairyu*, late 19th/early 20th century. Height 3½".

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NETSUKE KENKYUKAI

Study Journal

Volume 2, No. 3 September 1982



Cover Description

Kiseruzutsu (pipecase). Signed *Tokoku* with gold seal *Bairyu*. 20.5 cm. Original pipe by *Hogen Haruaki*. For further description see *Kokusai and His World* herein.

Table of Contents

The Cover	3
From Your Editor	4
Membership Corner	4
Letters	5
President's Message	5
Kokusai and His World Part II <i>by Paul Moss</i>	7
Kano Tessai and His (School of) Followers <i>by Richard Silverman</i>	21
Manju - A Further Defense <i>by Betty Levitt</i>	26
Collector Beware <i>by James Hume</i>	29
Portrait of a Collector—Jerome Spiller <i>by Joy Epstein</i>	33
Why We Collect <i>by Michael R. Bernstein</i>	37



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Netsuke Kenkyukai Society is a non-profit organization. The purpose of the Society, as stated in its By-Laws, is to promote the study of netsuke and their related appurtenances, the artists who created them and the society from which they evolved. Such study is accomplished through conventions, exhibits, lectures, workshops and the dissemination of written materials, photographs and its Study Journal, published four times a year.

Submission of articles and materials for consideration for publication in the Study Journal are solicited at the submitter's risk. Send to Netsuke Kenkyukai Study Journal, c/o Robert L. McGowen, 2400 First National Tower, Tulsa, OK 74103, U.S.A.

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FROM YOUR EDITOR



Robert L.
McGowen

A couple of days ago I received my copy of *Netsuke and Inro Artists and How to Read Their Signatures* by George Lazar-nick and I have spent the time since in perusing its pages. I feel compelled to share my enthusiasm for George's magnificent effort. When it comes to signatures, I've always thought "Let George do it" or even been mindful of Rhett Butler's comment "Frankly (George), I don't give a damn!" But these new books (for they are two large volumes) are more—much more—than a *Signature Book* (George's title for his earlier publication which bears no comparison with these). They represent a massive compilation of information regarding netsuke and inro artists (including much from the Meinertzhagen

Card Index) with many "new" and intriguing facts, theories and surprises. (Iwami lovers will be ecstatic!) There have been a number of informative books on netsuke, but only a certain few are indispensable and came as milestones in the furtherance of our knowledge of the netsuke art form. In my opinion, *Netsuke and Inro Artists* joins those few which will be found at the top of everyone's list. Netsuke Kenkyukai is in the process of obtaining a special price for our members.

Judging by responses to our plea for materials for the Study Journal, readers appear to have rightfully concluded that we are "for real." We are gratified and hope that continued contributions of articles, questions, letters and suggestions will allow us to sustain the quality of this and our other recent issues.

In this issue Paul Moss brings us the second half of his article *Kokusai and His Friends* and Richard Silverman writes concerning *Tessai* and his "school." Betty Leavitt proffers further support for the *manju* form and James Hume provides an interesting piece on certain legal aspects of netsuke purchasing. Michael Bernstein furnishes some provocative ideas on our motivations for collecting.

Enjoy!

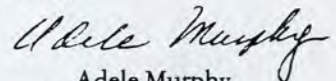
tion", and Sharen Chappell, who gave a talk on "Carvers of Merit and Influence". Betty Dore, President of the Chapter, and Henry Toledano, Treasurer, are to be commended for getting their first meeting off to such a great start.

James Rose, President of the Washington Kenkyukai Chapter, reports that their May meeting was also a great success. Sadae Walter gave a fine presentation on lacquer. Members cooperated by bringing everything from lacquer netsuke to an exquisite lacquer picnic box. Cornelius van S. Roosevelt, long-time netsuke collector and author of *Netsuke Bibliography*, was one of the speakers for the July meeting. He discussed the wide variety of materials from which netsuke are made. The second speaker, John Mang, well known dealer in books on orientalia and owner-operator of Kirin Books, reviewed and talked about reference materials useful to both novice and advanced collectors.

Chapter President Rose has also appointed four volunteer members to the posts of Secretary, Treasurer, and Advisors (2). In addition, they are publishing a newsletter of their activities, six times a year. James Newton of Vienna, Va. was elected as editor and publisher. James Staggs of Rockville, Md. will take over the Club's bank account, collect dues and fees, and act as meeting host. The advisors are Isabel Cunningham of Annapolis, Md. and John Mang of Alexandria, Va. This all takes a great deal of work and cooperation. We congratulate them for their accomplishments.

For those of you who are wondering how to store your study journals, we will be offering, in the future, a Library Case, to preserve your copies of the Study Journal.

Please don't hesitate to contact either James Hume or me at anytime with your suggestions, new ideas, etc. Remember this is your organization.



Adele Murphy
Membership Chairman

MEMBERSHIP CORNER



Adele
Murphy

ALTHOUGH I am very pleased with the continued increase in membership, I am also somewhat disappointed that the members themselves are not making a greater effort to recruit new people. I urge you to please try a

little harder. The success of this organization is strictly dependent upon your voluntary support. Several dealers continue to assist us in our membership drive, yet we need everyone's time and talents to reach our goal.

The Bay Area Chapter of Netsuke Kenkyukai has informed us that their first luncheon meeting, which was held at the Westin Miyako Hotel in San Francisco, was a great success. The guest speakers were Edie Kurstin, who lectured on "Japan and the Netsuke Connec-

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



James Hume

Is anyone out there? Following my request for your feedback and help, in the June issue, the only information I received was a reminder I had written to myself. In case you didn't read my comments in the June issue won't you please do it now and let me hear from you. If you did read them, and have something to offer, won't you please share your ideas with me?

It is gratifying to see the exciting growth of our Study Groups. More groups will be formed in the future. If you feel that your area could support a Kenkyukai please contact me for further discussion.

The plans for our 1983 Netsuke Kenkyukai Convention in Washington (September 19-25, 1983)

are well underway. A Chairman for the Convention has been appointed and he can be contacted as follows:

James Newton
Convention Chairman
c/o Washington Netsuke
Kenkyukai
P.O. Box 34623
Bethesda, MD 20817
Telephone (703) 938-3584

Several members have commented that they noticed improvements achieved in the June issue of the Study Journal:

- 10% increase in number of pages
- higher quality printing process
- improved photo reproduction through use of a laser scanner and a finer quality line screen.

Further increases in size and our move to inside color will depend directly on our success in achieving a substantial increase in membership. Your help is needed here! Please sign up, recommend or even sponsor a new member. A membership in N.K. would make a thoughtful and worthwhile gift!

Best wishes and happy collecting!

James
James Hume

(not *Sotoba Komachi*) is a common one but the gravepost is rarely inscribed. I've got two *sotoba* in the book with the usual Japanese invocation, *Namu Amida Butsu*, "Save us, merciful Buddha." One is with a ghost leaning against a *sotoba* and is by *Seiyodo Bunshojo*, and another of a skeleton standing behind the *sotoba* with exactly the same invocation. This one is signed *Gyokko*.

The only other *sotoba* I can think of depicts *Ono No Komachi* as an old hag in the usual pose, sitting on the gravepost. This one is beautifully carved with the single character signature *Chi* - recorded previously in Davey as #112 in the Hindson List of Known Artists. Perhaps the single character in Mrs. Cunningham's gravepost is the same signature, *Chi*? I would have to see it.

George Lazarnick
Honolulu

You are to be greatly complimented on what you have done for the netsuke world. I thoroughly enjoyed Raymond Bushell's article in the June issue "In Defense of Manju" and am in complete agreement with him. The tenor of many columns being written is tendentious and many collectors are kept from enjoying the wide spectrum of netsuke that are to be had. I hope my *manju* of extraordinary high relief a *four* will help to prove Mr. Bushell's point. The carving is over 1/2" in high relief. It is an unsigned ivory dating from the mid-19th C.



Oval *Manju* - ivory, mountain scene with temple, bridges and waterfall. Mid-19th C. 2 1/2" wide.

Richard Silverman
Los Angeles, California

Letters, see page 38

LETTERS

First of all congratulations, and thanks to all of the founding fathers and mothers of the Study Journal itself.

I'm writing as well in response to Isabel Cunningham's question in Vol. 2, No. 2, because both Virginia Atchley's *Rakan* and the Sotheby June 23, 1976, Lot 221, Skull and skeletal arm *tonkotsu* set by *Kaigyokudo (Masateru)* are illustrated in my NETSUKE & INRO ARTISTS, and How To Read Their Signatures.

Virginia's *rakan* is definitely not sitting on a gravepost (*sotoba*). I've put that *rakan* in a small section called "Inscriptions Only" because

the single character was obviously added later and is decidedly not a Buddhist invocation. The caption I put with it was quoted directly from Virginia's speculations in *A Sheaf of Japanese Papers*. I couldn't improve on what she had to say there.

The *sotoba* with the *Masateru* skull has two inscriptions, the larger one being an invocation to Kon-go Yasha Myo O, one of the gods of the Bodhisattva who is identified by an ancient Sanskrit character called a Bonji (see *Koji Hoten*, Bk 1, pg. 63, f. 6 63). The other large characters read *Gojin Kono Gotoshi* and mean, "I, and everyone else, will be like this."

The column of smaller characters read *Koro Yasu* (appropriate time) *Mu No Ie* (House of nothingness).

The subject *Ono No Komachi*



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WHEN we look analytically at the carvers of the Asakusa "school" we recognise a sympathy of feeling, a common language of treatment, subject matter and material stemming from the inspirational influence of *Kokusai*; but we quickly realise that each of these carvers has established a completely independent character to his work. This is exactly the reason for these and other individual carvers to be rated more seriously than they have been in the past. There is more expression and spirit in eccentric work than in classic carving, and certainly more originality. Even when, as we shall now do, we attempt to rope in large numbers of adepts and followers under the term "*Kokusai-bori*", we must remember that the most important factor of his influence was the freedom they borrowed to express their own creative impulse in a way that had never been done before. There is no *Kokusai* pupil; each of the carvers of the Asakusa grouping were their own type and made their own contribution, developing and regressing in diverse directions.

Rensai is the carver generally most highly regarded of this *Kokusai* sub-group, and a good example of this individual identity. Without too much experience, a good eye can read his knife-strokes like the brush-strokes of a Chinese orthodox painter such as *Wang Yuan-ch'i*. *Ishikawa Rensai* was born in 1832 (?) and worked primarily in the period 1850-80; he was said to have retired in 1876, but was in fact still carving in 1879. This dating is quite early in comparison to *Kokusai*'s, and it has been suggested that it was initially *Kokusai* who was the pupil of *Rensai*. An early name of *Rensai* was *Renkoku* (he may also have used the name *Rendo* at rare intervals) and it is possible that *Kokusai* took his name from that. The reverse could be true, of course, but whatever the chronology it seems evident that *Kokusai*, master or pupil, was regarded, then as now, as the more influential, or let us say pivotal, of the two great carvers.

Kokusai And His World

PART II

by Paul Moss

This is Part II of a two part article by Paul Moss, of Sydney Moss, Ltd., London. The first installment appeared in the March 1982 (Vol. 2, No. 1) issue of the *Netsuke Kenkyukai Study Journal*. As before, spelling and grammar have, at the author's request, been left in the "mother tongue."



Fig. 1. Sparrow in *ryusa* style. Unsigned. Attributed to *Rensai*.

Rensai's subject matter is not as wide as that of *Kokusai*, nor his chosen forms as eccentric. He seems to have carved virtually nothing in the way of the extended *sashi* or *obibasami* types in which *Kokusai* delighted, and much preferred the *manju* and *ryusa* rounded forms, which he adapted brilliantly to his own requirements of design. He carved almost as much in ivory as in stag-antler—in wood almost never. There are several examples of three-dimensional ivory netsuke by him which are rather less in the Asakusa style, but still the good ones have an eccentric distortion and bulging of form to them. *Rensai*'s overwhelming predilection of subject was for birds and animals, especially *shishi*. Buddhist paraphernalia also crept into his repertoire, with a typically archaic Chinese flavour to them; and he also represented reptilian subjects like frogs, lizards, bats and

kappa quite often. His ivory models may have included other animals and human figures. *Rensai* used a coral inlay in both ivory and stag-antler models on occasion.

The clue to *Rensai*'s personal style is in the roundness of his carving; even with *manju* forms he never merely incised or even carved in relief. His frogs are not fat, but they are unctuous; his birds, even the sharp-beaked ones, are stylised and softened and sweet. Birds and even fierce Buddhist animals are thus given a cuddly, playful character, and *Rensai* very often inlays their eyes with little, round jet pupils to bring them alive and pick out their facial personality. He is one of Raymond Bushell's chosen carvers in *Collectors' Netsuke*; see the examples on pages 150-151 there for an illustration of his rounded birds and toy *shishi*.

Technically, *Rensai* was very interesting. He sought an extreme effect in both design and technique, and at his best was a very clever and successful practitioner of both. The strong design element in his work, especially in the *manju* form, is a strong element in Japanese art running through *Korin*'s adaption of subjects like a row of cranes or fences to the format of a pair of *byobu* screens, or naturalistic forms within the confines of the lid of a rounded or rectangular lacquer box, or of *mon* crest designs on metalwork or lacquer. *Rensai* reformed the *manju* and *ryusa* types into a formal framework (often a rounded rectangle, an oval or quatrellobe border) for his bold stylised designs; two stylised *chidori* against an arabesque of breaking waves, or kingfisher, frog and lotus counterpointing each other. Asymmetry and a deliberate stylisation of natural forms to fit the format are design trademarks. By contrast *Rensai*'s three-dimensional models quite often go against this feeling and introduce their stylisation by denying the naturalism of the form and portraying the beast head-on and symmetrical. This gives to his *shishi*, for instance, a formalised archaic feeling and echoes in a per-

sonal way *Kokusai's* formalisation and playing with line. Fig. 1 is an example of both this symmetrical type and his adaption of the *ryusa* form. It is a sparrow, very similar to the long-life sparrow Bushell illustrates as no. 235 of *Collectors' Netsuke* - unsigned, but indisputably by *Rensai*. This piece is to me a superb example of an entirely conceptual notion transferred into sculpture, raising netsuke to the status of an art form. *Rensai* has had the idea of a sparrow (a toy *chidori* sparrow, of course) flying in clouds among bamboo, and he has given form to this idea by making the bamboo the sparrow's feathers, and the clouds his wings.

The other technical aspect of his work is the effect he strives for through finish and stain, the latter primarily on ivory. Along the lines of the maxim that genius is ten per cent inspiration, ninety per cent perspiration, Chinese carvers of wood and ivory maintained that carving was forty per cent actual carving and sixty per cent polishing; and I have heard the same formula in different proportions from European carvers. Possibly this is one part of an explanation for the existence of sub-standard examples from carvers of genius like *Kokusai* or *Masanao* of Kyoto. If you are carving experimentally, the inspiration catches up with you and the

finishing only seems relevant to the best pieces. *Rensai* was innovative, but he was a designer and stylist rather than a genius, and he needed a strong finish to make his creations work. His heavy yellow stain and sweeping line recalls the Osaka types.

It remains to distinguish *Ishikawa Rensai* from his son of the same name, who was also called *Kakujiro*. Both reportedly signed their name in a square seal form, *à la Kokusai*, with the single character *Ren*, though there are many variations of that character, and sometimes a full two-character *Rensai* signature was used, not always in seal form, and sometimes with an alternate *sai* character (not the art name character for "studio" but another *sai* which means nothing - a particle representing the end of a sentence or clause) as indicated by Bushell's signature photographs in *Collectors' Netsuke*. The younger *Rensai*, who was born in 1853 or 1854, lived, as did his father and as did *Kokusai*, at Sugacho, in the Asakusa district, but is reputed to have carved only *okimono* and pipecases in the Meiji period. It seems to me likely that he did carve netsuke, if not many, and I put forward Fig. 2, a stained ivory pup chewing a sandal, as likely work of *Rensai II*; if only for the reason that the carving does not suggest to me

the hand of the *Rensai* who carved Fig. 1. It is signed with a good seal character *Ren*, and it may be simply a derivative piece carved by *Rensai I* as an exercise; but if there are netsuke by *Rensai II*, I suggest this one as a candidate. There is one last piece of speculation regarding *Rensai* before we leave him, for which I have no basis of proof but for a couple of suppositions over three or four years. The name *Ren* means lotus, just as *Koku* means a valley, and I have seen just two or three pieces which seemed to me to be the work of *Rensai*, unsigned, but on a lotus base. In the same way that *Kokusai* suggested and played with the arabesques of his signature, did *Rensai* use the actual meaning of his name to give us a fairly obvious clue? I would welcome argument on this point from anyone who has examples which might prove or disprove the point. The lotus base, of course, may be a common enough device even if your name is Oppenheimer.

Or, for that matter, *Masayuki*, although I don't recall seeing a *Masayuki* with a lotus base. *Hoshunsai Masayuki* is the third major carver of the Asakusa junta; and although the quality of his work was mixed he was capable of masterpieces in *Kokusai-bori* style. He has not been highly regarded previously in comparison with *Rensai*, but I feel that his good stag-antler models are more inventive and humorous than *Rensai's*, and that he deserves recognition as a major Asakusa master (the highest praise). *Masayuki* worked at about the same time as *Rensai*, to about the beginning of the Meiji period. He was rather more stylistically influenced by *Kokusai*, and some of his best work recalls *Koku's* elongated *obi-basami* forms and Buddhist subjects. *Mokugyo* and weird wine vessels, cucumber vines and fruits and elephants with wrinkled skin were favourite *Masayuki* subjects; though it must be said that with some of these good models he tended to repeat himself. I illustrate as Fig. 3 a very clever stag-antler model of a monkey which jumps up



Fig. 2. Stained ivory. Signed *Ren* in seal form. Attributed to *Rensai II*.



A strong wood and gesso figural netsuke of "Ryujiin" god of the sea, holding the tide ruling jewel, his dragon wrapped as a sorcerer's mantle. Late 18th century, style of Shuzan.

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and down a bamboo branch; it is entirely free-carved and can face either way with a lugubrious expression, inviting our sympathy for his predicament - fated to jump up and down this piece of bamboo forever. Slightly different, of course, other versions of this successful model exist, and the same applies to another of his good subjects, the badger priest charmingly asleep on his *mokugyo*, in which the corona of the antler is beautifully utilised to represent the ruffled edge of his cloak. Michael Birch has used the same notion.

The reason for *Masayuki's* lack of reputation is that he reverted to carving wood netsuke in the *Ryukei/Gyokkei* tradition, like his pupil *Kato Masayuki* (essentially a Meiji carver who adopted his master's *kakihan* and even carved Tokyo *okimono*). It would be very interesting sociologically to know the chronology of *Masayuki's* wood Tokyo netsuke. Did he start carving them, come under the magic aegis of *Kokusai* and carve stag-antler masterpieces until he ran out of ideas and then revert to wood pot-boilers? Or did he turn his hand to a few wood pieces when he needed money or when the agent gave him some wood and demanded some commercial pieces? *Masayuki* demonstrates less independence from the commercialism of the system than either *Kokusai* or *Rensai* in any case, with his repeated models of popular subjects. There is no answer to this question, unless some contemporary records make any mention of him, but it does seem more plausible that, among carvers if not among the paying public, there was a vogue for *Kokusai-bori* at the very end of Edo/start of Meiji and that *Masayuki* found himself as an inventive talent of sorts within the confines of that trend. It would be nice to think that, having discovered that he could carve great netsuke, he gave up hacking wood forever; but the evidence of his pupil *Kato* would suggest that much or all of the wood pieces are later work. Did the popularity of *Kokusai's*



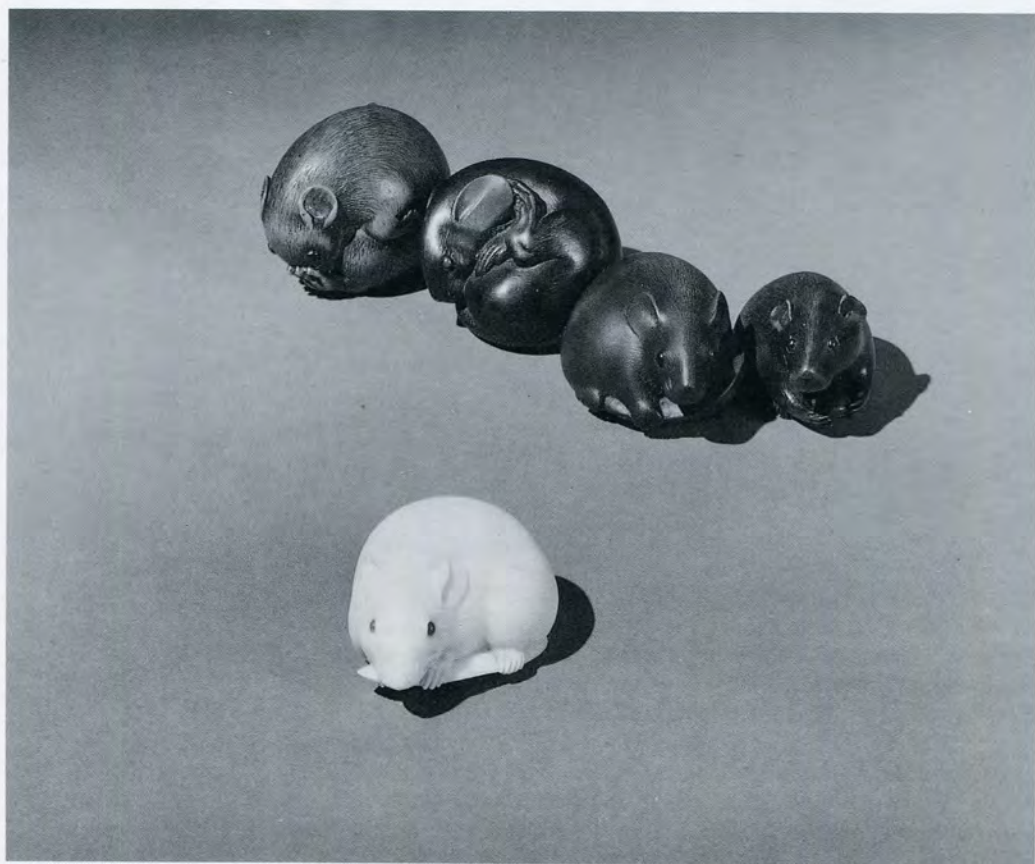
Fig. 3. Stag-antler. Signed *Masayuki*.

style die out after the master, with a temporary price-hike reverting to lower levels, forcing the likes of *Masayuki* back into the Tokyo crowd-pleasers? We have the evidence of low *Kokusai* prices to contend with, on offer to European collectors at the turn of the century. At the same time, there must surely have been a commercial element to *Kokusai's* influence on other Tokyo carvers. Whatever the reasons for the temporary flowering of carvers like *Masayuki*, we should recognise that his good work represents a major and lasting contribution to the Asakusa oeuvre. He carved ivory three-dimensional pieces, like *Rensai*, and they derive from ordinary Tokyo types (the *tengu* and egg is a successful subject) but he adds an individual and slightly eccentric touch, to make them exciting models. He may have compromised more than *Kokusai*, and some subjects may try too hard to please and prettily, but he was capable of great and eccentrically rewarding work.

In addition to the established heroic triad of *Kokusai*, *Rensai* and *Masayuki* I would like to stress the qualities of a fourth uniquely Asakusa master, *Hoshino Hakusai*, who seems to have worked right at the end of Edo and hardly into the

Meiji period, about 1840-1870. The reason for his lesser fame is that he was much less prolific than these others, and it may be that within that period he had a relatively short working life. He carved primarily stag-antler in *manju* or *ryusa* form, with rounded modelling of great sensitivity. He frequently incorporated silver and other metal features into his designs, which he made himself; indeed, it is recorded that he made not only *kagamibuta* frames, but also plates, and was equally at home in metal chasing as in carving. One *kagamibuta* frame of his houses a superb *Shuraku* gold plate. Sometimes *Hakusai* signed on a metal tablet, generally with the full signature *Hakusai* in seal or semi-cursive form; at other times he might engrave his signature or leave it in relief, often merely suggesting the single character *Haku*, which is very simple and easily misread or read as a decorative flourish. Fig. 4 is a lovely figure of a flying *tenjin* suggesting the *ryusa* form, with a silver diadem, a design virtue made of the spongy core of the material, and the single character *Haku* left sprawling on the reverse like a fanciful cloud design.

Of the other very few *Hakusai's* I have seen most have been fine



LEADER OF THE PACK - *Kaigyokusai Masatsugu* of Osaka - Hull Grundy stable.

In the stretch are *Horaku* of Kyoto - another Hull Grundy runner, *Yoshihisa* of Tsu, *Ikkan* of Nagoya - yet another Hull Grundy pedigree, edging out *Tomokazu* of Gifu.

But that's not all; the rest of the field comprises fine examples of every single zodiac animal. More tigers and monkeys than we can count. Puppies by *Okatomo*, *Tametaka* and *Ichimin*. Snakes by *Tomokazu*, *Kokusai* and *Kaigyokusai*. Boars by *Tomokazu*, *Sessai* and *Masanao* of Kyoto. Heraldic dragons, dragons in scrolls, dragons by *Sukenaga* and *Masanao*. Not to mention our five other fine rats, including a *Masanao* of Kyoto ivory masterpiece in our October exhibition, Eccentrics in Netsuke.

The Moss ark has other animals too: tanuki by *Minko*, *Kokei* and *Hidari Issan*. An *Ono Ryomin* octopus cooking kebabs, a *Mitsuhiro* one escaped from its pot trap and an 18th C. one standing on six of its tentacles. And such exotic species as baku and bear, pencil fish, stag beetle and whelk.

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Fig. 4. *Tennin* in *ryusa* form. Stag-antler with silver inlay. Seal *Haku* (*Hakusai*).

kagamibuta, plus one very good *mokugyo* with a free-carved figure of Kannon standing inside, from the Brockhaus Collection sold recently in Germany. His subject matter tends to the Buddhist, like that of *Kokusai* and *Masayuki*, but is of course entirely individual. One extraordinary work of his is illustrated as Fig. 5; it is a pipecase in either stag-antler or a pure bone (Dr. Jim Rose and I had a long and inconclusive debate about a hole for a vein running through it) and in expressive detail and tactile plastic finish, it is lovely. On the reverse, a *manju* button holds the cord supporting *Ashinaga's* loincloth, and on the *manju* I read the character *Haku*, playfully suggested. Others might read it as a simple design on the *manju*, and while it is true that the subject matter and form are unusual for him, and that there are no metal details, I suspect strongly that this is a *Hakusai* creation of particular excellence. Another carver at the same time with similar work and techniques, including metalwork, was *Hakuzan*, and although it is possible that this was an alternative name for *Hakusai*, I think it more likely that he was a pupil or close associate in the same style. Again, he was far from prolific.

The Meinertzhagen card file in the British Museum lists other sus-

pected members of the Asakusa "school", some of whom are so obscure that I have never seen their work at all. The better known are *Eisai* (*Yeisai*), who primarily carved *ryusa* in stag-antler and signed in a round reserve with the single seal character *Ei* (long or eternal) and *Ko*, suspected by Meinertzhagen to be an abbreviation for *Kosai*, though I have a different theory which I will explain towards the end of this article. *Ko* (bright, alternate reading *Mitsu* as in *Mitsubiro*) is again found in seal form on *ryusa* and especially on those where an outline sunken space is left on the front for a gold or metalwork plaque, usually representing an animal or figure group. *Ko's* signature is often mistaken for the seal of *Koku* (as is the *Ei* seal on similar *ryusa*, with or without metal plaques); but although the *Koku* character is subjected to endless distortion and variations, these other characters are quite readily legible as only slightly fancy versions of simple characters, and with a minimum of concentration should easily be interpreted as such. Other known but rare Asakusa carvers listed are *Oishi Hosai*, who on occasion collaborated with *Hakusai*, and *Hozan*. Two other possible Asakusa carvers are mentioned by Meinertzhagen with a question



Fig. 5. Pipecase in stag-antler or bone. Signed *Haku* (*Hakusai*).



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Shown: Netsuke sold at Sotheby's during
the past season include an ivory study of a kirin by
Masanao of Kyoto, sold in New York for \$24,000; an
18th century ivory study of a Dutchman, sold in New
York for \$5,500; an ivory study of a cat and a rat by
Tomotada of Kyoto, sold in London for £17,900.

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Fig. 6. Pipecase in stag-antler. Signed *Hakuosai*.

mark, *Hogyoku* and *Raku*; and two later Asakusa carvers are mentioned, *Meiju* and *Seigyoku*. The most I can offer apart from duly repeating this list is to affirm that I have seen an Asakusa *manju* signed with the seal character *Raku*. No further details are forthcoming, and again I would be grateful for instructive correspondence from anyone regarding these carvers, if they existed.

This listing brings us to another motley group, wherein the vexing question of *Kokusai's* popularity and commercial worth again rears its ugly head. Several Tokyo carvers, with solid, identifiably Tokyo names and recorded Tokyo work, have carved fine and not-so-fine stag-antler pieces in *Kokusai* style and even acknowledged his influence. Again, in *Collectors' Netsuke*, Bushell has mentioned this phenomenon and illustrated work by two such, *Homin* and *Gyokumin*. I too have possessed a lovely *Gyokumin baku*-headed *mokugyo* which not only took a *Kokusai* model and applied *Kokusai* treatment to it, but which also boasted a *Koku* seal after the *Gyokumin* signature. I illustrate as Fig. 6 a stag-antler pipecase which I think can be directly compared to the *Hakusai* model, Fig. 5. This piece, though not at all as good, is by the Tokyo carver *Hakuosai*, and I have seen a relief-carved Asakusa-type pipecase by him as well. In this case, there is no question that the carver could be *Hakusai* under another name; it is a Tokyo carver influenced by the Asakusa model (though I don't deny the possibility that the very name itself might have been prompted by admiration for Asakusa carvers). In the London "Contrasting Styles" exhibition, with its fascinating *kiseruzutsu* focus, there was even a pipecase of the same essential model as Figs. 5 and 6 by the *So* school master *Joso*; his early work, one must assume. As we shall see from this and other examples, it is evident that in the late Edo and early Meiji period carvers in Tokyo, whose work in the habitual small three-dimensional

wood and ivory netsuke types is well-known and documented, from time to time stepped outside that mould to make eccentric work after the example of *Kokusai*, admiring his influence to the extent of on occasion mentioning him on the piece, and indeed terming the new weird stag-antler style *Kokusai-bori*. After due consideration I consider it likely that during his working life there must have been a trend, in certain quarters of the buying public at least, for *Kokusai's* work and work in his style, and a concomitant higher market price. It is a nice idea to think of the noble artist sweating away in a garret, above the mundane considerations of profit, and I remain convinced that *Kokusai* himself rarely compromised his art by carving a netsuke for any other reason than that he wanted to try out something new, grotesque and whimsical. However, the carvers who left aside their Tokyo livelihood and carved stag-antler cannot all have done it for love and the frustration of turning out bourgeois netsuke. I shall continue to think fondly of overburdened hacks with their latent genius inspired by *Kokusai* to white-hot levels of weird and wonderful accomplishment, but I think that the chronology of his followers demonstrates that market forces determined for them that while *Kokusai* was popular, the thing to do was to join the *avant-garde* and carve bits of Buddhist grotesquery from the nearest itinerant stag. When his popularity waned, and when that was I should hate to hazard, it was back to little wooden men with a vengeance. At that point super-crispness came into vogue.

None of the Asakusa carvers can demonstrate this shift of style more graphically than *Tokoku*. For *Tokoku* was early on a carver after the example of *Kokusai*, as should be made brutally apparent from the second character of his name, and from the names of his followers and pupils. He is widely known and celebrated for his later work, inlaying crisply carved wood with inlays,



Superb, beautifully patinated ivory netsuke of a Sennin holding a sceptre in the shape of a reishi fungus. His coat of mugwort leaves is deeply undercut, and the himotoshi are cleverly concealed in the folds of his clothing. Unsigned, 18th Century. Height 11½ cm.

The name Sennin is applied to hermits who, through withdrawal from ordinary life in the mountains, have attained supernatural powers. Since there are over 500 of them in Chinese and Japanese mythology, and many of their attributes are duplicated, it is often impossible to identify an individual Sennin.

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most of coloured ivory. His earlier work was primarily in pure ivory, and in walrus ivory and stag-antler, of *manju* and *ryusa* form, and much of it betrays the prevailing *Kokusai* wind of the time. It may come as an unpleasant shock to those who regard *Tokoku's* later work as of something approaching divine intervention to learn that the old European taste has always dismissed this inlaid type of Meiji export toys. The Meinertzhagen card file, in discussing various individual later pieces with handwritten entries by Meinertzhagen, Winkworth and others, is on almost every card scathing about the effect striven for; and it was apparently with a sense of relief that Meinertzhagen was able to conclude his entry on *Tokoku* with the thought that "his earlier work appears to have been in ivory, especially in *manju* form, lacking any inlay, in which he reveals himself as a true artist of inspiration and refinement." Which sentiment I can only endorse with the pious hope that the Asakusa formative influence might be as beneficial to all struggling young talents.

There were three *Suzuki Tokokus*, and the first, who used the art names *Fuzui* and *Bairyu*, used a gold seal and lived 1846-1913. To be fairer to him, he was regarded in the early years of this century as the greatest living carver. He was orphaned at the age of 13, and became a professional carver by the age of 20. Apparently the second *Tokoku* did not take the name *Fuzui*, and used a red seal to distinguish himself from his master.

Bushell has observed that there is a theory that the first *Tokoku* used a gold seal, the second a silver seal and the third a red lacquer seal, pointing out that if expertise were all that easy, experts would be out of a job. I agree that nothing is that clear cut, and I am sure that the first *Tokoku* used materials including all those mentioned, as well as *aogai* and naked wood to leave his seal on. However, two points are relevant. First, I do think it likely that the sec-

ond and maybe third *Tokoku* might possibly avoid using the gold seal of the master (maybe the third *Tokoku* would avoid using the second's silver seal) out of deference; and secondly I have observed that pieces with gold seals tend to be of the best quality regardless of any rules of thumb about their authorship.

Other pupils of the master recorded include *Kokoku*, *Yukoku*, and possibly *Kojo* (*Hironori*), *Hokurei* and *Yoshihide*. I should argue that it is very likely that from his name and style of work *Sokoku*, known for his inlaid figures of a *rakan* or mendicant seated with a begging bowl, was also a *Tokoku* pupil. Furthermore, the fine but little-known carver *Kakuyosai Hironobu* was a contemporary of *Tokoku* working in the same style; early on producing fine and delicate pure ivory *manju*, and later a few inlaid figure netsuke.

Many of the early pure ivory *manju* types considered to be typical of *Tokoku's* earliest work are unsigned examples, attributed to him by reason of one or two signed pieces. Representative of this type is a beautiful squared *manju* with geese flying across the moon in delicate relief, illustrated in the George Cohen collection catalogue, *In Search of Netsuke and Inro*, no. 71; though in the catalogue the piece is attributed to *Rensai*. The walrus ivory or stag-antler openwork *ryusa* type is more commonly signed, either *To* or *Tokoku*, often on a silver plaque. We may suppose that the *To* signature was used earlier, as a direct reference to the Asakusa usage of a single seal character signature, but this is not necessarily the case. The magnolia *ryusa* from the Swedlow collection illustrated in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art exhibit in August 1981, no. 30, is a fine example of this type; indeed, good and very good examples are by no means impossible to find.

The Meinertzhagen card file reports; "It is said that after 1873 he made pipecases to meet the demands of the time, but none of these have so far been recorded."

One such pipecase, a very rare link piece, is illustrated on the front cover of this issue of the *Kenkyukai Study Journal*, with its original, unusually ornate gilt copper pipe, made by *Hogen Haruaki*. This must represent early work of *Tokoku*, unless he made the pipecase to fit an already existing pipe, because at that point *Haruaki*, a renowned Tokyo metalworker, was an old man. Not only is the pipe extraordinarily fine, but *Tokoku* adapts the *Kokusai-bori* subject of a stag-antler *reishi* fungus by onlaying a snail in horn and two ants - one in copper peering over the rim and a gold ant inside the bowl of the pipe cavity. The pipecase is signed *Tokoku*, with a gold seal *Bairyu*. Other fine *Tokoku manju* include pieces made in collaboration with metalworkers and signed by both; incorporating a very strong and strikingly decorative design and inlaying technique within the format of the Asakusa stag-antler *ryusa*. *Tokoku* was also known, of course, for his collaboration with other artists in *inro*-making. If further evidence is needed, several of the variant *Tokoku* signatures illustrated by Bushell in *Collectors' Netsuke*, p. 145, betray a strong Asakusa seal-form influence.

I have mentioned *Sokoku* as a likely pupil of *Tokoku*, and I consider that he is another carver whose formative work was very much composed of *ryusa* in the Asakusa style, several examples designed to incorporate shaped metal inlays. He signed using the seal form of the first character of his name, *So* (not the same *So* as in the *So* school), generally in relief in a reserve. This *So* character rather resembles the *Ei* of *Eisai*, but the two are distinct and I doubt that *So* is merely a variant of *Ei*. This supposition that *Sokoku* was possibly the author of *So ryusa* was purely an empirical theory until the January 1981 International Netsuke Collectors Society convention in Honolulu, where Bernard Hurtig displayed a standing stag-horn *kappa* from Virginia Atchley's collection, in a strange style unmistakably connected with Asakusa

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materials and techniques, though very individually treated and not altogether successful. For me, this was the link piece which confirmed the *Sokoku* theory, and as it was kindly loaned to me for the *Kokusai* workshop I was triumphantly able to work the logic through and produce the object, and those present were obliged to agree.

This small victory for the empirical method of lateral jump-thinking leads me on to make wild claims for another *Tokoku* pupil, *Kokoku*. Meinertzhagen's listing of the *ryusa* artist signing himself *Ko* in seal form as *Kosai* is a guess, as his question mark after the entry indicates. I have absolutely no proof, but as the other members of the school produced similar work, with similar names, I think it plausible, at least. *Kokoku's* later work is notable for its inlay in various materials; not only the metalwork of his earlier (posited) types, but particularly lacquer.

The work of several Asakusa artists I have mentioned involves the marriage of stag-antler or marine ivory with metalwork, either in small inlaid details and signature plaques, inlaid metal plaques of figural shapes as central design elements in *ryusa*, or as *kagamibuta* plates with stag-antler frames. I know that Sachi Wagner is planning to write up metalworkers in netsuke for the *Kenkyukai Study Journal*, so I won't anticipate her too much, but to summarise the position a few points seem likely. The first is that there was clearly a close bond between the Asakusa carvers and the Tokyo metalworkers. Some of the most superior *kagamibuta* have stag-antler bowls in *Kokusai-bori*, some signed. The Asakusa carvers were the outstanding makers of pipecases, which had of course to house metal pipes, and the open-work pipecases had to incorporate the correct size and sometimes complementary design of pipe. The second point is that carvers in some cases are known to have done their own metalwork, *Hakusai* being the prime example. With the later *Tokoku* school carvers I think it

quite likely that they themselves did the tiny metal inlays and seals on their figural work, but I would imagine that the large figurative plaques onlaid into *ryusa* netsuke earlier on were examples of collaboration with metalworkers. *Kokusai* himself made not only great *kagamibuta* bowls, but also *manju* with large and fine areas of metal inlay, presumably not done by him, but by a collaborative metalworker. It would be more



Fig. 7. *Chaire*. Seal Koku (*Kokusai*).

likely that the metalworker's contribution be signed separately later on, perhaps in the Meiji period, as in *Tokoku's* earlier work with large metal elements. These thoughts on metalwork and Asakusa are inconclusive, and I would be grateful for any come-back on this area from interested readers with link pieces or more knowledge on metalwork than I possess.

I would like to conclude with a further few random thoughts about *Kokusai*, the hero of this story, which I have recently picked up on. I hadn't known that he was, it is thought, left-handed; in Japan, as elsewhere, this is considered to be a mark of general ability. Perhaps he was an admirer of an earlier eccentric netsuke carver, *Miwa*. A pipecase and a wood monkey mask of his are inscribed "after *Miwa*", and *Kokusai* once repaired a wood monkey by *Miwa* and added his signature. Next, I suspect that the pieces which are signed with his full signature in *kanji* rather than the

Koku seal are earlier work. As a reasoned example, I recently handled a good three-dimensional ivory netsuke, signed *Kokusai* in *kanji*, with a *kappa* peering round a lotus leaf with a toad underneath it, all on a flowing stream base. I see that the virtually identical piece is in the Victoria and Albert Museum's new netsuke display, signed by *Gyokuyosai*, his early Tokyo master. Bob McGowen has a very similar piece, unsigned.

Kokusai also made objects which raise him in status above the level of the artisan *netsukeshi*. He made stag-antler hairpins, for example, and such objects for the tea ceremony as an incense stick holder and a stand for a bamboo tea whisk; things of simple form and extreme beauty. Just yesterday I bought a netsuke by him which delights me for its subject matter and whimsy. Fig. 7. It is a *chaire*, or pottery tea caddy, in stag-antler, with an ivory lid. Not only does *Kokusai* imitate the lustrous glaze pooling and streaking, as a refined master such as *Mitsubiro* might have done with the same esoteric subject; he uses the coarse stag-antler to further good effect. Because of the material, the base of the *chaire* is a plug, and it perfectly represents the spiral knife-cut base of most *chaire*. Not only this, but the *Koku* seal is carved in globular relief in a circle, to imitate the stamped pottery mark of such as the *Raku* family of potters. A typical *Kokusai* conceit, in which one recognises the familiar quirky humour of the master.

Very recently the Hull Grundy gift of Asakusa stag-antler netsuke has been put on, I think, permanent display at the British Museum. Primarily in *ryusa* form, the work of most of the available carvers is represented, including pieces apparently by artists not mentioned in this article. They are lovely, instructive and stimulating to behold, and I urge you to make a special trip to see them as soon as you possibly can. The range and inventive variety of *Kokusai* and friends will leave you wanting more.

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WHEN one thinks of masks, the name *Deme* immediately comes to mind; for lacquer, *Zeshin*. But there was a man who was equally at ease in both of these fields and has been overlooked by the Japanese and Western art world - *Kano, Tessai*. He was born in Gifu on February 15, 1845 and died on October 28, 1925.

Ueda, Reikichi devoted almost a full page to him in his writings; but *Meinertzhagen* never mentioned him (he did discuss the *Deme* school as did others), nor did *Jonas, Behrens, Trower* or *Davey*. *Jahs, Bushell* and *Okada* mentioned him only in passing. There are photos of many pieces carved by *Tessai* illustrated in a number of books, but that is where it ends. I have scoured many resources, but to no avail. *Tessai* simply has been overlooked.

I became very interested in *Tessai* because I love mask netsuke. Over the years, I have bought and seen many of them. About ten years ago while carefully studying a group of these masks I realized that the

Kano Tessai and His (School of) Followers

by Richard Silverman

signatures were not all *Tessai's*. There were certain similarities among them, but they were not identical. In fact, I realized that this man had a "school" of followers - most or all of them were his pupils, one can assume. Thirteen distinct signatures can be found; there are probably more. Each carves the same kinds of masks and basically uses the same kinds of lacquer and lacquer techniques. Since *Tessai* lived for eighty years, his life's work covered the span of most of his fol-

lowers. I have a *tomobako* with a signed Gigaku mask carved by him at the end of April, 1922, his 77th year.

He surely was admired and his netsuke must have been in demand to have so large a school of carvers who faithfully followed his ideas. His work, and that of his students, is unique. They truly miniaturized the great masks of the Kamakura Period (1185-1333), including the 31 Gigaku masks residing in the Sho-so-in in Nara. Their ability to preserve the stylistic integrity and intricacy of the originals both in form and texture is amazing when one considers the size of these netsuke.

Tessai was an innovator. He originated *teppitsu-bori*, a technique of engraving landscapes, figures or other subjects on a flat surface of wood or metal with a steel pen or stylus. This was to culminate in the superb pipecases that he made. Although most of his netsuke and *okimono* are in Japanese cypress (*binoki*), he also carved in pine and



Gigaku Kanron. Signed by *Tessai* with *kakiban*.

Noh Komen. Signed *Tessai* with *kakiban*.

Gigaku? Man with hat. Signed *Tesshun to*.

boxwood. He used "whale mustache" (baleen) which looks like tortoise shell, but is much rarer.¹ Baleen was probably used primarily for corset staves.

But his greatest achievement was in the field of lacquer and textures. He simulated ceramic crackle for an incense holder (*kogo*) - a method unknown to present-day lacquer artists. He made both a shade of blue and a texture that are not lacquer, although one would think so. He simulated flakes of color of old peeling paint on many of his masks to give them the feeling of old age. He brushed lacquer on baleen (and maybe tortoise shell) to give it a special iridescence. The kind of paint he used is unknown today. The vast majority of his works that I have seen are mask netsuke and pipecases.

All these techniques cause problems when trying to restore or repair his works today. Many of his mask netsuke tend to flake with age, and it can only be hoped that the research conducted in Germany will be able to correct this problem.

Tessai started carving Buddhist subjects by himself in 1857 (at age 12), and established himself as a professional painter and sculptor in 1868. In 1875 he moved to Tokyo and devoted himself to carving but he returned to Nara for further studies in painting and carving in 1883. Three years later he was appointed by the Minister of Education as a member of the committee for the study and research of ancient arts, and in 1890 he became a professor of the Tokyo Art School. It might be assumed that some of his students from this period became his followers. Until 1916 he lived in many places including Tokyo and Nara where he continued to study the sacred treasures of various



Skull with scarf. Boxwood. Signed *Tekkan*.



Oni. Signed *Kyokoku*.

temples. In 1917 he moved back to Nara to carve daily.

It would be very difficult to date most of his works, although the bulk of his netsuke and pipecases probably were carved between the mid-1880's and 1922, which in itself is a long span of time.

Considering the scholarly background of *Tessai*, one might wonder why he devoted so much time to the carving of masks, which most people believe to be a lesser art form. But this is not so. The history of Japanese masks runs parallel to the history of sculpture, though on a minor scale, and reflects the artistic styles and techniques of sculpture of the periods in which the masks were made. Indeed, the carver faithfully preserved styles no longer current in sculpture, an idea which must have appealed to *Tessai* with his background steeped in antiquities.

The rich variety of Japanese masks include Gigaku, Bugaku, Gyōdō, Noh, Kyōgen, and folk masks. Gigaku masks are large and constructed to cover the upper part of the head as well as the face. Their realistically modeled faces have un-Japanese features, while their relaxed, free expressions reflect the artistic trends of the Nara Period (710-781), when the temple dramas of Gigaku enjoyed great popularity. Although Bugaku dances filtered into Japan from Korea and China concurrently with Gigaku, extant Bugaku masks date mostly from the 11th to the 13th Centuries. Though smaller than Gigaku masks, they vary greatly in size, but rarely cover more than the face. Some of them resemble Gigaku masks in expression and size, but others approach the subtlety and shallow dimensions of Noh masks. A peculiarity of some

1. Baleen is a horny substance growing in the mouth of certain whales - especially the right whale and some sperm whales. It grows in independent plates from 2 to 12 feet long attached in two ranks along the upper jaw, forming a fringe-like sieve to collect and retain food.



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Bugaku masks is their elaborate construction, with separate noses, chins, eyes, or cheeks so attached that they sway and roll with the movement of dance. Gyōdō masks represent Buddhist deities and cover the entire head in such a way that the costumed dancer looks like a statue come to life. They are used in memorial services and temple processions. Noh masks have a distinctly Japanese restrained beauty mirroring the taste of the Muromachi and Edo Periods (1392-1867). Slightly smaller than the human face, their subtle expressions aim at understatement and implication. The comic Kyōgen masks, with their humorous and farcical, exaggerated expressions, date from the same periods.

Tessai, as did his followers, devoted most of his skills to copying Gigaku and Bugaku masks. To a lesser extent he made Gyōdō and Noh masks. All of these were done as exact miniature replicas of the originals except for a few Noh and folk masks that were carved in boxwood and not lacquered. This was in direct contrast to all the great mask netsuke carvers of the 18th and 19th Centuries who devoted most of their skills to copying Noh, Kyōgen and folk masks, and rarely did any of them lacquer their pieces.

Many of the same meticulous skills used for carving netsuke were utilized in making pipecases (*kiseruzutsu*). Not only did he do mask designs on these cases, but he expanded his scope to include scenes from Chinese and Japanese folk legends and stories. He included long inscriptions on many of these pieces. For the most-part he used boxwood and meticulously engraved his designs using *teppitsubori*. The detailing of his subject matter was done in colored lacquers of the finest quality. Although basically two-dimensional, many of the scenes and masks portrayed seem to come to life in a three-dimensional way. Most of them are truly superb in their design and composition. Interestingly, his students rarely made pipecases.



Gigaku Heishitori or Bugaku Ni-No-Mai (Emi-Men). Signed *Kyoboku* to with *kakiban*.



Bugaku Ranryo. Signed *Tesshin*.

One wonders why his followers carved mask and *obihasami* netsuke, but not *kiseruzutsu*. I can only postulate an answer. With the demise of wearing kimono and the adoption of Western dress and customs, the need for *inro* and pipecases waned. In the ensuing years pipe smoking was replaced by cigarettes. The production of netsuke and *inro* continued as there was a demand and market for them by Western collectors. The same was not true of pipecases. They were collected by a limited number of Japanese, and there were sufficient numbers available. There are very few pipecases that definitely can be dated from the 20th Century.

From these few facts, one can surmise that most of his students carved netsuke during the last decade of the 19th Century and the first quarter of the 20th Century. It is almost impossible to date lacquer from this period as the netsuke

show little or no wear. Since none of these carvers seem to have gained any fame, there is no way at present to say exactly when they lived or carved, but that they did exist and made many fine netsuke is undeniable.

The list of students that follows is not definitive; in years to come pieces will be found with other signatures that will be added to this "school". There are nine carvers who followed the tradition of using one of the *kanji* (written Chinese characters) of the master - *Tessai* - for their own name. It is "Tetsu" which can also be pronounced "Tek" or "Tes" in certain combinations. This group comprises: *Tetsuro*, *Tetsuroku*, *Tekkan*, *Tessen*, *Tesshin*, *Tesshu*, *Tesshun*, *Tesso* and *Tekko*.² The next follower is *Shosai*. Although he did not use the *kanji* for "Tetsu" he did use it in part; both "Tetsu" and "Sho" have the same left-side radical of



Gigaku Kakura. Signed *Shosai to*.



Okame. Signed *Kyoka to*.



Noh Hannya. Signed *Tesshu*.



"Kane" (8 strokes), and thus the similarity.

The most difficult problem was trying to relate the last three followers' signatures to *Tessai* and I was not able to do so. Aside from the obvious similarities of subject matter and execution, there is only the *gyosho* (intermediate cursive form of writing *kanji*) style of signing, and in the case of one of them a similar *kakihan* (written or carved seal). These three are *Kyoboku*, *Kyokoku*, and *Kyoka*. There has been a reading of *Kyo-hitsu*, but after careful examination and conferring with a Japanese scholar it was decided that this piece is actually signed *Kyoka*. It has also been pointed out that the reading of *Kyoboku* could in fact read *Kyosai*, and thus the linkage between them comes from the "Sai", which is the same *kanji* in both names, *Kyosai* and *Tessai*. Unfortunately this "Sai" can never be used to link members of a school,

since it was used by so very many carvers and means nothing more than being of a group or school. It always is the last part of the name when used this way.

All of the artists listed here signed their names in *gyosho* and in a few cases their writing is almost in *sosho* (grass-writing) which is even more difficult to read; thus the difficulty in distinguishing the signatures. Many of them signed pieces with a *kakihan* that was quite similar to that of *Tessai's kakihan* - based on the first *kanji* and *Tessai's* given name of *Kotaro*, "Ko".

More written information to use in researching this group of carvers would have made the task an easier one. Readers with any information which might bring more light should write me.

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2. Although I have not seen the signatures of the last two artists (*Tesso* and *Tekko*), I have been assured by a very knowledgeable fellow-collector that he has pieces signed by them and the readings are correct, including a pipecase signed jointly by *Tessai* and *Tesso*.

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LET me rise to the defense of the *manju*, but let my husband Ted do it first in his way. He says, being a scholarly fellow:

There is, of course, between the *manju* and other netsuke one very obvious difference; the *manju* is circular. You may say, "Well, of course, but what's so marvelous about that?" I answer, your choice of adjectives is apt, for the *manju* is a marvel. Early on, man the artist discovered there were only two perfect two-dimensional shapes, the square and the circle, and he chose the circle to express his realization of the metaphysical idea that life's mystery can best be echoed visually by the circle, which has no beginning and no end, yet continues to flow. The Buddhists knew this, so they made a prayer-wheel. The Eleusinian Greeks knew this, so they made a *triskeles*. Raphael knew this, so he filled redondo after

Manju – A Further Defense

by Betty Leavitt

redondo with his many images of the Madonna holding her Christ-child, whose adult preaching told that life is ever-lasting. Metaphysically the circle is the expression of this idea.

But leaving metaphysics aside, which is not everyone's cup of tea, I've found that the perfected quadrangle, which is the square, is

artistically easier to accommodate than the circle. You have artistic sensibility, do you not? Imagine filling a circle with a completely balanced design. As against a square or a quadrangle, the circle can only be accommodated by a master. Try it out and you'll see what I mean. Or ask any graphic artist (and I've asked more than one) and he will tell you that the circle is the most difficult shape within which to perfect a design. The *manju* is circular.

Ted has approached the *manju* from an artistic viewpoint considering its form and what it expresses. My thoughts are naturally from the outlook of a collector and dealer.

Netsuke, of whatever kind, were utilitarian objects, useful items for all classes and professions. During three hundred years and more, every Japanese artist and craftsman, including the neighborhood

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Wooden netsuke of a reclining horse signed Masakatsu, Yamada School, late 19th Century. Length 5.8 cm; height 4.5 cm.



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doodler, produced netsuke. But the artist-craftsman group were not always just carvers; they comprised metalworkers, lacquer artists, carpenters, and potters and painters, as well as sculptors. So my fascination with *manju* does not just echo Ted's thoughts, with which I agree, but appreciates the *manju* which, of all netsuke, shows technically the most tremendous diversity.

First of all, the metalworker was the most important craftsman in Japan. The Japanese sword and its fittings was one of the greatest achievements. Alloys were created giving us gold and silver that do not tarnish, achieving tones and colorations literally painted with metal. While there are some metal figural netsuke, I have never seen a great one. On the other hand, the most beautiful *kagamibuta* (mirror-top *manju*) are the work of these great artists. They would grace the *inro* or

kinchaku (purse) and were worn with the greatest of ease - no fingers or toes sticking out to get broken.

The lacquer artist was involved in making wonderful *inro* and frequently would design a *manju* to match. This *ensemble* is the height of collecting. One that came my way was a *manju* with an *Utamaro* print reproduced by a fine lacquer artist on ivory. Thus we had the talents of three artists combined.

Works from the Satsuma, Kutani, Imari, and other famous potteries were invariably *manju*-style. To return to Ted's premise, pottery *manju* were frequently made in square shapes as well as in the common circle. The advantage of the *manju* style was that they could be easily handled in the kiln. Consequently many very simple *manju* were made for the working classes.

One style which was most easily produced in *manju* shape were the compressed or molded netsuke. These were made of powdered tortoise, ivory or other materials. They were mass-produced of necessity after the great earthquake of 1855.

Bone, ivory, and stag-antler were, of course, naturally shaped to make *manju* in any style. On these one will find work of the *netsuke-shi* who achieved just as great artistic results as one would find in *katabori*. Since these are so well-known and have been made by so many great artists I do not have to do any more than mention them in my defense of the *manju*.

In closing, I would like to suggest to any collector or "student" of netsuke, "Do not close your mind!" Look at everything—you'll be surprised at what you see. *Your* eyes are the determining factor of *your* collection.

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THE outcome of an incident which occurred last year in the United States absolutely astonished me, causing me to seek the professional advice of some attorney friends of mine. The information I received was so enlightening that I was motivated to write it into this article in order to share it with you. First let me explain that this article is in two parts (both parts in this issue). The first part deals with a layman's explanation of the overall matter followed by certain legal facts concerning U.S. law and information for those of you who wish to gain a broader understanding.

PART 1

Let me begin by introducing you to a section of our law commonly referred to as the "bona fide purchaser for value" law. With the exception of attorneys I have not yet met a collector who has heard of this law never mind one who understands it.

The following scenario demonstrates how this law works:

You have a family heirloom watch which is in need of repair. You take it to a jewelry store which is normally in the business of selling and repairing watches and you leave it for repair.

The next day a customer comes into the store, sees the watch, and offers to pay the jeweler \$1,000 for the watch. The jeweler sells your watch.

Who now owns the watch (in legal terms—who has title to the watch)? You or the purchaser? Well, according to the bona fide purchaser for value law, the purchaser now owns the watch and you cannot get it back. What about the question of stolen goods? You have heard that title to stolen goods cannot be transferred. Yes, as the legal opinion at the end of this article tells you that it is true. However, in law, while the jeweler had committed a deplorable act he has technically not stolen your watch but has entered into a process known as "conversion" which is not considered theft and as such is not a

Collector Beware

by James Hume

criminal act. While you may feel your watch has been stolen, the law does not recognize it as such and consequently your only recourse for recovery may be an expensive civil lawsuit against the jeweler to recover the value of your property. Note I say "the value" because you cannot recover actual property in that it now legally belongs to the purchaser.

Very interesting, you say, but what does this have to do with netsuke collecting? Well, the following incident is a somewhat complicated twist of the foregoing and happened to a netsuke collector who we shall refer to as Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Smith purchased three netsuke from a reputable oriental art dealer we shall call Dealer X. Netsuke 1 and 2 were sold to Mrs. Smith for \$2,000 each and netsuke 3 was sold for \$9,000.

One evening about a month after the transaction, Dealer X called up Mrs. Smith, who was horrified to hear that the police had just visited the dealer's shop and the dealer had learned that the netsuke were "stolen" merchandise. Apparently the so-called reliable source from whom the dealer had purchased the netsuke was a confessed thief—and the police were on their way to Mrs. Smith's house.

Shortly afterwards the police arrived and explained to Mrs. Smith that the thief had stolen several netsuke from a museum, some of which had been traced to Dealer X who in turn had sold them to Mrs. Smith. The police informed Mrs. Smith that she was in possession of stolen goods and asked her to turn them over to them. Mrs. Smith handed the three netsuke over to the police.

Mrs. Smith promptly went after Dealer X for having sold stolen merchandise to her and demanded her money back. Dealer X stalled, saying he would have to await the outcome of the situation before refunding Mrs. Smith's money.

Eventually the thief was convicted and the three netsuke were returned to the museum. The museum decided to sell the three netsuke through another dealer we shall call Dealer Y, who subsequently sold them to a collector we shall call Mr. Jones. Netsuke 1 and 2 were sold for \$1,500 each and netsuke 3 was sold for \$1,800.

About a month later (while Mrs. Smith still hadn't received her money back from Dealer X) the museum discovered a terrible mistake. Netsuke 3 was not one of the netsuke which had been stolen. In fact, it had never belonged to the museum. Subsequent investigation showed that netsuke 3 was not a stolen netsuke and as such constituted a legitimate sale to Mrs. Smith who could have rightfully retained the piece. However, due to the fact that Mr. Jones was a bona fide purchaser for value, title to the netsuke had passed to Mr. Jones and there was no way Mrs. Smith could get her netsuke back.

Dealer X eventually refunded to Mrs. Smith the money she had paid for netsuke 1 and 2, however, he would not refund her the \$9,000 for netsuke 3 because it was a legitimate sale. He argued the only reason she eventually lost ownership of netsuke 3 was the fact that she had surrendered the piece to the police, which was not his responsibility.

The museum gave Mrs. Smith the \$1,800 it had received for netsuke 3 from the sale to Mr. Jones and apologized profusely for any inconvenience it might have caused. Inconvenience?! Mrs. Smith had lost \$7,200, somewhat more than inconvenience. The whole episode was a "no win" situation for everyone:

- The thief was accused and convicted of more than he was guilty of.

• Dealer X had lost face and had accrued a certain stigma on his reputation plus he was out the \$4,000 refunded to Mrs. Smith for netsuke 1 and 2.

• Collector Jones feels so guilty about possessing netsuke 3 which everyone feels should belong to Mrs. Smith that he is currently trying to sell it.

• The museum is embarrassed, to say the least, and if Mrs. Smith has her way they will suffer some losses in cash donations from certain benefactors in her area.

What about Dealer Y, you say? Didn't he make a commission on the eventual sale. Well an interesting fact in this already complicated affair is that Dealer Y is accused of being dishonest or at least stupid. You see it was Dealer Y who had several years before arranged for netsuke 1 and 2 to be donated to the museum. When the museum gave all three pieces to Dealer Y to sell, they indicated that these were the same pieces which had been

donated some years earlier. Certain parties contend that Dealer Y should have realized the error connected with netsuke 3.

Questions To The Readers

This whole affair generates several questions which I would like to see some of our readers respond to:

- Should Mrs. Smith have given up the netsuke to the police?
- How could Mrs. Smith have avoided giving up the netsuke?
- Does the bona fide purchaser for value law adequately protect all parties?
- What recourse does Mrs. Smith have to recover her \$7,200?
- Did Dealer X act properly under the circumstances?
- Could Dealer Y be reasonably expected to have caught the museum's error or his own for that matter?
- Should collector Jones feel guilty? Remember the story of the jeweler! If you give a netsuke to a

dealer to sell for you or to have it repaired, or whatever, and the dealer sells it—this constitutes conversion, not theft, and consequently title can pass to the purchaser. You may be left with no recourse except for a civil suit against the dealer to recover the value of your property, but you most likely will never recover the property itself.

Caveat emptor means "let the buyer beware". Perhaps we should have another caveat—"let the collector beware".

PART 2 Legal Opinion

Validity of a bona fide purchaser's title to stolen goods

The following will examine the issue of the validity of a bona fide purchaser's title to stolen goods. This issue can be illustrated by three distinct situations:

(1) X (thief) steals an artifact and sells it to Y (an individual). Thereafter, Y sells the artifact to Z (an individual). Z has no knowledge of the stolen nature of the artifact and

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purchases the item for fair value. Does Z obtain valid title?

(2) Y (an individual) buys artifacts from B (art dealer). Y has complete faith in B because of their long-standing business relationship and therefore buys artifacts from B on a frequent basis. B purchases an artifact from X (thief) with full knowledge of its stolen nature. Does Y obtain better title than B?

(3) Y (an individual) purchases an artifact from X (thief) without knowledge of its stolen nature. What is the nature of Y's title to the artifact?

The common issue in all of the above factual situations is whether a bona fide purchaser can acquire valid title to stolen goods. The answer to this issue has been succinctly stated that "no matter how fair and honest the later sale, the buyer loses when the item purchased is 'stolen' goods". T. Quinn, Uniform Commercial Code Commentary and Law Digest 2-260 (1978). This proposition is vividly illustrated in the case of *Schrier v. Home Indemnity Com-*

pany, 273 A. 2d 248 (D.C. App., 1971). The *Schrier* case concerned the theft of a 1967 Cadillac Sedan from a New Jersey car dealer. Two weeks later the appellant purchased the car from a Maryland car dealer, who subsequently went out of business. The New Jersey car dealer was reimbursed by the appellee insurance company. Upon ascertaining the location of the car, the appellee requested that the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police seize the car as stolen property. In the ensuing litigation the court held that the appellee insurance company had rightful title to the car. Although acknowledging the innocence and good faith of the appellant, the court stated that "a possessor of stolen goods, no matter how innocently acquired can never convey good title...for a sale of such merchandise, though to a bona fide purchaser for value does not divest the person from whom stolen, of title." *Schrier*, 273 A. 2d at 250-51.

Section 2-403 of the Uniform Commercial Code (hereinafter "UCC") is consistent with the above analysis that a bona fide pur-

chaser cannot receive valid title to stolen goods. UCC Section 2-403 provides in relevant part:

(1) A purchaser of goods acquires all title which his transferor had or had power to transfer except that a purchaser of a limited interest acquires rights only to the extent of the interest purchased. A person with voidable title has power to transfer a good title to a good faith purchaser for value. When goods have been delivered under a transaction of purchase the purchaser has such power even though:

- (a) the transferor was deceived as to the identity of the purchaser, or
- (b) the delivery was in exchange for a check which is later dishonored, or
- (c) it was agreed that the transaction was to be a "cash sale," or
- (d) the delivery was procured through fraud punishable as larcenous under the criminal law.

(2) Any entrusting of possession of goods to a merchant who deals in goods of that kind gives him power to transfer all rights of the entruster

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(3) "Entrusting" includes any delivery and any acquiescence in retention of possession regardless of any condition expressed between the parties to the delivery or acquiescence and regardless of whether the procurement of the entrusting or the possessor's disposition of the goods had been such as to be larcenous under the criminal law.

Section 2-403(1) statutorily provides that a purchaser of goods acquires all title that his transferor had power to transfer. In the case of stolen goods the thief has no title to convey, therefore, a bona fide purchaser cannot obtain title to stolen goods. A thief only has the power to transfer possession of the goods to a purchaser.

However, the purpose of Section 2-403 was to expand the rights of a third party who has innocently purchased goods from a seller who has

"voidable" title to the goods or has only been entrusted with the goods. "Voidable" title contemplates a transaction wherein the original owner parts with the goods voluntarily in circumstances which, while deplorable, do not constitute outright theft. Subsection A-D of Section 2-403(1) are illustrations of when a seller with voidable title can convey valid title to a bona fide purchaser. For example, under Section 2-403(1)(b) a purchaser who buys goods with a check, which is subsequently dishonored, can convey good title to a bona fide purchaser. The original purchaser's payment by check was valid payment, although it was conditional, which allowed him to possess the goods. In addition to possession of the goods, the payment by check gave him the power to transfer good title to a bona fide purchaser. Therefore, a subsequent bona fide purchaser can acquire better title than the original purchaser who had voidable title.

Under Section 2-403(2) a bona fide purchaser can acquire valid title to goods entrusted, but not owned, from a "merchant who deals in goods of that kind". Although the original owner of the goods only entrusted the merchant with the goods, this is sufficient to empower the merchant to convey valid title to a bona fide purchaser. There are certain limitations upon the operations of the entrustment theory. First, the possession of the goods must be in the hands of a merchant who deals in goods of that kind. Additionally, the ultimate buyer seeking the protection of Section 2-403(2) must be a buyer in ordinary course of business. Section 1-201(9) defines a buyer in ordinary course of business to be:

A person who in good faith and without knowledge that the sale to him is in violation of the ownership rights or

Collector, see page 35

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Ivory netsuke of Hotei with hands on head, inlaid with jade, coral, gold, silver, tortoise shell, etc.

Signed on a red lacquer tablet -
Akishige 19th C.

See "Masterpieces of Netsuke Art" P172 for a similar example.

SCENE I:

THE floor of the New York Commodity Exchange - 10:30 A.M. - Friday - 26 March, 1982. The atmosphere is frenzied. The commodity brokers are in full stride attempting to place their orders. The arm waving is violent; a sea of limbs thrusting and shaking, waving and grasping. The din heightens. Fingers are snapping and voices are shouting. There is also an enormous amount of bobbing, weaving, and even jumping by the brokers - a jockeying for position in an attempt to close transactions for their clients. The amount of energy expended borders on the atomic! In the middle of this arena is a tall, youthful looking man. From a distance he projects the image of an ex-football player. It certainly seems likely, watching him in motion, going full tilt, never tiring, apparently loving every minute of this giant industry that affects millions of lives.

SCENE II:

A meeting room in the Westbury Hotel in Manhattan - 6:00 P.M. - Saturday - 27 March, 1982. About seventy-five persons are listening to a well-dressed executive delivering a welcoming address. The subject is the formation of a Netsuke Study Chapter of Netsuke Kenkyukai in New York. The speaker is knowledgeable, humorous, and persuasive. He articulates in soothing tones. He believes in his subject. His enthusiasm catches hold of the crowd and it is with him. They are delighted he is to be their first president.

SCENE III:

Inside a ground floor apartment, a former brownstone home on New York's upper Westside - 2:00 P.M. - Sunday - 28 March, 1982. The apartment is in the middle of a total remodeling and promises to be a gem when finished. The spring-like Sunday afternoon penetrates a glass wall that encloses what will be one of Manhattan's major miracles - an outdoor garden. The only furniture is a dining room table, still envel-

Portrait of a Collector

JEROME SPILLER

by Joy Epstein



oped in yards of polyethylene, hugged by a bench and chairs. A quiet, soft spoken man, appearing to be in his late thirties, is entertaining two visitors. They are sitting at the table discussing netsuke and the host is showing his pieces. He obviously adores the beautiful miniature carvings and is telling his guests about his collection. His manner is so quiet and unassuming that his guests do not realize, at first, how tremendously knowledgeable he is about netsuke.

Do you recognize the three gentlemen described in the above scenes? Would you be shocked to learn that they are one and the same? Well, read on and learn about Jerome Spiller, a remarkable netsuke "addict," (his terminology) so named by his loving parents. He was welcomed, forty-three years ago, in the Spiller household in LeRoy, New York, a small town close to Rochester. The blue-eyed, blonde-haired Jerry grew up there, a good student who in his teens emerged as a leader of his peers. He found himself organizing and chairing clubs and groups in high school. He was a born "doer." And so it seemed only logical that Yale University would welcome this

aspiring pre-med student into it's hallowed halls in the late 1950's. But only a year and a half later, Jerry made a major decision that changed the direction of his life. He realized that he did not want to be a doctor and decided to leave Yale. There followed a period of honest soul-searching out of which came the discovery that he was tired of leadership and involvement in causes. He felt he needed to be in the background of life's happenings. With that in mind he moved to New York City in 1962, returned to college, this time to Columbia University, where he completed his studies, obtaining a degree in European History. It was 1964 and Jerry knew that he wanted to remain in New York. He had also developed a real thirst for traveling. After having studied the history of nations, he yearned to see those wonders of the world about which he had read. But, how does one do this without money? The solution appeared one day when he found a job selling phonograph records for one of the country's largest record stores, Sam Goody, on Broadway. The job was exactly right for him; it required very little effort, no commitments, the surroundings were pleasant, and the salary adequate. The best part of the job was that it was not too time-consuming and he was able to arrange for long vacations. He was with Sam Goody for six years, and in that time he took yearly trips to Europe and Africa for as long as one or two months. A popular book of the time showed the "rugged soul" how to do Europe on \$5.00 a day. Jerry says he proved the author was correct. While he was on that first trip, in 1965, he found himself in Tangier. As he walked the streets looking for something typically Moroccan to take home, he found himself in a small shop full of delights for the tourist. So what did Mr. Spiller select - a miniature ivory carving right out of Japan! It was a fisherman sitting with a cormorant (a large, gluttonous, web-footed, aquatic bird) and holding a basket. Jerry was fascinated by this carving in the round, and he loved its tac-

tility. This piece, sent to the dealer by a brother who resided in Tokyo, began Jerry's introduction to netsuke and his indoctrination as a collector.

Jerry returned from his first trip abroad eager to explore the antique shops and any area that would lead to the discovery of netsuke. He also began studying the subject. The following year he was attending the annual Madison Square Garden Antique Show, in New York, when he found a netsuke that is probably his all-time favorite - a tall standing ivory figure from the 18th Century, unsigned and a real beauty. There it was in a dealer's display case along with all kinds of "odds and ends." All Jerry really knew was that the piece immediately became special for him, even though he was taken aback by the price - \$80.00 - a week's salary! He agonized over the purchase for several days, finally deciding to be extravagant, although he says he wouldn't have been able to acquire the piece had it been \$5.00 more.

In 1971, Jerry made another major change in his life. He gave up his quiet, non-demanding job selling records. At the urging of a friend, he decided to try his talents as a broker in the Commodity Exchange. He went to work for his friend's firm learning the business of commodity futures. His former relatively quiet job was traded for daily pandemonium and Jerry discovered that he really enjoyed the new life. He stayed with the same firm until his friend retired in 1980 at which time he became a full partner in the firm of Kachel-Baker-Spiller & Co. He is a wholesale commodity broker, only dealing in gold, silver, or copper futures. His clients are either stock-exchange companies, such as Merrill Lynch, or institutions that require an agent for purchasing large amounts. (Sorry, netsuke lovers, he does not handle individual accounts). All of which keeps him going at a hectic pace. But he does stop, from time to time, to look back at those strange roads he has traveled. The young Jerry of high school years, the

"organizer," emerged into his twenties as an "observer," uninterested in being a creator of events, enjoying the passive role of non-involvement. So, how does one go from this uncomplicated life-style to the Commodity Exchange, one of the most aggressive, competitive fields in the world? And not only did he make the change, but he has become eminently successful in this new area. Jerry probably does not know the complete answers himself, but he does say that he feels the



Jerry's favorite netsuke.

different phases his life has gone through "were necessary to bring him to where he is today." He could not have just gone from college to Comex. The changes in life styles have also prompted a return to organizational work, primarily for the development of interest in the netsuke field. He accepted the presidency of the N.Y. Chapter of Netsuke Kenkyukai when he realized that if he wanted "to see the great love he felt for netsuke developed in others" he would have to do it through involvement in organizations and study groups. One of his main interests today is to see the

understanding of netsuke "grow and thrive through persons," like himself, "who will generate the enthusiasm this art form deserves."

As Jerry's horizons kept shifting with his various careers, he found his early preferences for types of netsuke also changing. As a beginning collector, he liked animals and people, but his tastes rapidly became more eclectic. The one element that has remained constant is his search for the rare and unusual. He has never been satisfied to merely purchase examples; it had to be an unusual study of the subject, or he was not interested. To this day he has never found an ox that appeals enough to add to his collection. And because he is drawn to the "off-beat" type of netsuke, he has found the artists of the Asakusa School, with their unusual materials and subjects, prime favorites. He admires the creativeness of *Tokoku* and particularly those works that utilize unique combinations of materials. The Spiller Collection is really exciting to view. The diversification of pieces lures the viewer back for a second and third look. One has the feeling that he does not want to miss any one of the unusual assemblage: those large and powerful netsuke, the humorous netsuke, the Kyoto School animals, and those fine works by contemporary artists.

Jerry Spiller, the youthful collector in his 20's, started out looking for "meticulous pieces," but he also thought that "the more that was going on" the better! He quickly graduated from that phase and with knowledge came an "appreciation for fine craftsmanship above all else." Nor does he consider a purchase on the basis of economic appreciation. Those pieces that join the Spiller collection are there because Jerry likes them. In 1971, he found a beautiful ivory netsuke of a cockerel with two chicks. The asking price was \$250.00. he had never paid that much for a piece before, but he loved the netsuke so much that he asked the dealer to hold it until he received his Christmas bonus. The dealer agreed, and Jerry

had a thrilling Christmas present. It wasn't until some time later that he found out the piece was signed, and by *Okatomo!* This example personifies Jerry's attitude toward buying - love what you acquire, if it turns out to be the work of a major artist, so much the better, but that is secondary.

Jerry, the professional market analyst, recently reflected on the economy as it affects netsuke. He pointed out that "all economies go boom or bust, as well as the art field. The recent record-breaking prices affect the market on the short run, but not in the long run. Collectors may be frightened with prices escalating too rapidly, but those record-breaking prices do not determine the level of the market except over a period of time - not necessarily a generation but at least a couple of years." As a collector he is torn two ways: on the one hand he is "thrilled

that prices have jumped," but on the other hand he is "anxious about the cost of the next piece he may want to purchase." He is "ambivalent about netsuke becoming a Market" but optimistic for the future of this art form. The awakening of interest in netsuke (either because of, or in spite of the economy) is one of the most exciting things Jerry has seen since he started collecting, and this expanding interest insures its future. Those persons that worry about higher prices diminishing the growth of netsuke should spend a few minutes with Jerry. He will quickly convince you that the world's supply of wonderful netsuke is abundant. They are there to be found, in all price ranges, or according to the Spiller philosophy, "A Rolls Royce is still a Rolls Royce, and a Jeep is still a Jeep - but what's wrong with a Jeep?!"

Collector, from page 32

security interest of a third party in the goods buys in ordinary course from a person in the business of selling goods of that kind but does not include a pawnbroker. "Buying" may be for cash or by exchange of other property or on a secured or unsecured credit and includes receiving goods or documents of title under a pre-existing contract for sale but does not include a transfer in bulk or as security for or in total or partial satisfaction of a money debt.

Therefore, because the foregoing applies to obtaining title through a merchant, an owner entrusting his goods to an individual does not risk the possibility of losing his title when such individual sells the goods to a bona fide purchaser.



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WE collect to satisfy certain needs—some of them healthy and some of them unhealthy. The basic needs that explain any human behavior are the needs for recognition and time-structuring. The role of a hobby in alleviating the perpetual problem of what to do with the next twenty-four hours is obvious; therefore I will concentrate on the need for recognition.

The interests and characteristics we were given recognition for in childhood as ways to obtain Mom's or Dad's love have a major role in determining adult personalities. Among the currencies we learn in our childhood to trade for love or recognition are: beauty, sex, food, money, leadership, sentimentality, self-abasement, drugs, violence, uniqueness, power, and articulation. Of these sources of recognition, money, leadership, uniqueness, power, and articulation can be clearly related to our motivation to collect—the triumph of astute investment, a feeling of being in the *avant-garde*, a sense of special possession, a feeling of superiority, and the joy of the language of connoisseurship are all familiar experiences to the collector.

Additionally, there are many other needs which each of us possesses in our own unique personality configuration. Let us examine some of the other needs our netsuke collecting gratifies.

1. Achievement—to master the history, folklore and religion of Japan, as well as knowledge of carvers and carving. Also to build a collection to meet our standard.

2. Affiliation—to cooperate and socialize with other collectors and dealers, both informally and within the context of organizations.

3. Exhibition—to be seen and heard. The thrill of amazing, exciting and intriguing others with our favorite piece—be it a *Tomotada* kirin or an unsigned *mingei* netsuke found in a flea market.

Why We Collect

Thoughts On The Psychology Of Collecting

by

Michael R. Bernstein, J.D., Ph.D.

4. Order—the satisfaction that comes from the arrangement, balance and organization of our collection.

5. Play—to rejoice in the humor of netsuke. To laugh at *Oni* and *Shoki*, *Okame*, the self-righteous frown of *Daruma*, or the grotesqueries that enliven the Japanese imagination.

6. Sensuousness—to enjoy the feel of a netsuke, the glow of its patina, its *aji*.

7. Sex—the erotic delight of *shunga*.

8. Understanding—to ask and answer questions. To theorize about the schools of carvers, the symbolism of pieces, the patterns of the market.

9. Status—the feeling of “I am O.K.” “I am important” that an art collection bestows upon its owner.

10. Identification—Provenance gives an identification with the paragons of good taste. Strong pride of ownership can sometimes lead to the metaphorical position “as if I carved it myself.”

The Psychopathology Of Collecting

Unfortunately, the dark side of human behavior imposes itself everywhere. For some, collecting entails more suffering than joy. Some of us acquired such overwhelming feelings of Not-O.K.-ness—unlovability, inadequacy, inferiority—in childhood, that we

spend the rest of our lives trying to compensate. This inner pain expresses itself many ways in collecting.

1. Aggression—attacking other people's taste. Going out of the way to make someone feel uncomfortable about their collection.

2. Compulsivity—the compulsive collector will be full of doubt about each purchase. Also, there will never be enough: the need for acquisition outstrips appreciation. The rampant Inner Child screams “I want it” and may seduce or con the Inner Adult into believing it is a wise decision. Once the piece is obtained, its importance diminishes and anxiety mounts about the next piece. This collector habitually overspends and over indulges. Compulsivity insures that the hobby will bring more tension than relaxation.

3. Dishonesty—the acuteness of feelings of deprivation in the Inner Child fuels an anger that permits the collector to lie, steal and cheat. The frequent notices about stolen netsuke illustrate this.

4. Fear of loss—the collector who is consumed by the fear of loss of his collection through fire or theft. The collection becomes more of a worry than a pleasure.

Permission

Many of us were programmed with such stoppers as “You don't deserve nice things.” These bad messages make us feel guilty about spending money. It is necessary to have permission to gift ourselves. We can learn that we deserve wonderful things like beautiful netsuke. Whatever a realistic appraisal of our finances allows is O.K.

In summary, collecting approached positively can be a well-spring of happiness. Our Inner Parent can supervise the custodianship of treasures for the next generation. Our Inner Adult can study and appreciate the art. Our Inner Child can rejoice in beauty.

Joy Epstein's tribute to Ann Meselson (Vol. 2, No. 2) recalled meeting that delightful collector during a discussion of *ojime* at the netsuke seminar on Cape Cod in 1975. Her warmth and charm captivated everyone in the group more than the exquisite *ojime* that she wore. Inspired by her collection, my husband began to seek comparable *ojime* to add to my modest accumulation. When he became terminally ill, my choice *ojime* and the accompanying memory of Ann's friendliness were the talisman that never failed to give him pleasure. Owning tiny bits of perfection and meeting collectors like Ann Meselson are rewarding experiences during smooth sailing; in rough waters they offer even greater dividends.

Isabel Cunningham
Annapolis, Maryland

Like Isabel Cunningham (see Letters in Vol. 2, No. 2), we too have enjoyed the mystery of a single character on the gravestone of our *Sotoba Komachi* and found the beginning of an explanation in Neil K. Davey's NETSUKE book on the Hindson collection (p. 452, no. 112) and Neil's assurance that our *Chi* character is no more likely to represent a sculptor's signature on Japanese gravestones than are the initials "R.I.P." which appear on Anglo-American ones.

Following is our recently received more extended explanation from Mr. Shinzo Shibata of Kobe, Japan, whose brother Ichiro's San Francisco shop "The Daibutsu" is well known to netsuke collectors.

We hope that if our sharing of this information has helped solve Mrs. Cunningham's "secret", it won't have detracted from her netsuke pleasures.

Michael and Lucy Foster
Portland, OR



概 = 空 = ku
可 = 風 = fu
一 = 火 = ka
水 = 水 = sui
地 = 地 = chi
about 6 ft. high

Now, you will probably note from our *Noh* Play, from which this subject was taken, that *Komachi* is seen sitting on a decaying wooden *Sotoba*. Let us leave *Komachi* and the decaying wood aside for awhile, as I would like to write a little on the *Sotoba*.

When a wooden *Sotoba* is erected to mark a grave, it is but temporary and would later be replaced with a carved stone. In the old days, it carried five words in

Sanskrit meaning, Space or Heaven ("Ku" in *kanji*), Wind ("Fu"), Fire ("Ka"), Water ("Sui"), and Earth ("Chi") – the five fundamental elements that were believed necessary to create the universe, the Land of the Buddha, where the dead would live in peace. In fact, the *Sotoba* will be the mark that the piece of land there is the Land of the Buddha.

The name, dates etc. of the deceased will be written below the five words.

I am giving you a rough sketch here, showing in brief what it will look like.

Returning now to the netsuke in question, I think it was the intention of the carver to show that the *Sotoba* was decaying and the only remaining character visible was *Chi*.

I haven't examined the netsuke, so am still kind of dubious to make this solution, as in most cases, the five words are in Sanskrit and not in our every day *kanji*, but people knew the words in *kanji*. Thus, the carver must have thought it best to carve in *kanji* rather than the difficult Sanskrit.

However, in recent years, I notice that the *Sotoba* is losing its carvings and shown only with the top piece and without the five words. Perhaps it's the idea of the present young generation to cope with the economic and other pressures of everyday life.

(Extracts from a letter of Mr. Shinzo Shibata of Kobe, Japan).

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