



根付研究会

# NETSUKE KENKYUKAI

Study Journal

Volume 3, Number 3, 1983



The famous two kappa seated on turtles.

Ivory: Signed *Masakazu*, 19th century. L. 1¾". Ex Kurstin collection. Illustrated Okada's *Real and Imaginary Beings*, no. 100; and Okada's *Netsuke*, no. 211.

Wood: Signed *Chuichi* (Tadakazu). Osaka School, 19th century. L. 1¾". Ex Kurstin and Behrens collections. Illustrated Joly's *W. L. Behrens Collection*, pl. 70, no. 5664; Okada's *Real and Imaginary Beings*, no. 101; and Okada's *Netsuke*, no. 212.



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# NETSUKE KENKYUKAI

Study Journal

Volume 3, Number 3 September 1983



Cover:  
Shoki and oni from the  
Harry Glass Collection.

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EDITOR  
Robert L. McGowen

ADVERTISING MANAGER  
James Hume

PRODUCTION MANAGER  
Dori Kohlberg

PHOTOGRAPHIC CONSULTANT  
Michael B. Glass

ART DIRECTOR  
Thomas O'Toole

COLOR SEPARATIONS  
Spectragraphic, Inc.

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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

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**Robert L.  
McGowen**

**A**LL devoted people feel called to make at least one pilgrimage during their lifetime: Moslems to Mecca; Jews to Israel; Catholics to the Holy See, etc. In his *Netsuke Familiar and Unfamiliar*, Raymond Bushell, at page 103, describes the Buddhist pilgrimages — *henro* — which consist of circuits of a certain number of

temples of a particular Buddhist sect. He describes the pilgrimage of the Shingon sect, consisting of visits to 88 temples on the island of Shikoku, a 700-mile trip of approximately two month's duration. He tells us that the pilgrimage was not only designed better to assure salvation, but also as a once in a lifetime chance to escape from routine drudgery.

For those of us removed from the centers of netsuke "commerce," we too have the opportunity for a pilgrimage to a netsuke shrine every year or so, i.e. to a netsuke convention. There are probably no equivalent opportunities for learning and for viewing assemblages of the works of particular carvers, schools, periods, materials, etc. The Washington Netsuke Kenkyukai Convention this month is such an opportunity. For those who cannot attend, we plan to carry in future issues articles

covering subjects presented at the Convention, which promises to be one of the most informative ever.

Between pilgrimages, those of us in the netsuke desert may find partial fulfillment often only through materials published in catalogues, books and journals. I renew my monotonous plea for submission of informative materials for the Study Journal. Slake our thirst!

It has been two years since my last visit to a netsuke paradise. So if you see a fat man wearing "a reed hat, white garments, straw sandals and carrying a staff" at the Washington Convention, you will understand. It will merely be this pilgrim, anxious to renew old friendships and make many new ones!

Robert L. McGowen  
Editor

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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**James  
Hume**

**P**REPARATIONS for the convention have taken so much of our time that we have been unable to complete the project of getting out a membership list of those members who gave us permission to do so. My best guess is that it will be completed early in the New Year.

We were finally able to get a post box at the postal station of our choice which will now mean another address change. Don't worry, all mail is being forwarded from the previous boxes. Please make note of the new address:

NETSUKE KENKYUKAI  
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U.S.A.

Another project under way is a custom binder to store your back issues of the Study Journal. This should also be available early next year.

Many thanks to the many members who took the trouble to congratulate us on the last issue. We plan to include inside color in future issues and are also considering an expansion in the size of the Journal as our membership continues to grow.

I'm looking forward to meeting many of you at the convention. Best Wishes and Happy Collecting!

James Hume

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## MEMBERSHIP CORNER

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**Adele  
Murphy**

**I**T is hard to believe that September has arrived and that the Netsuke Kenkyukai Convention is upon us. Our President, James Hume, and his staff,

have devoted a tremendous amount of time and energy in putting together this convention.

Although busy preparing for the convention, the Washington Chapter of Netsuke Kenkyukai continues to provide high quality programs for its members. Helen and Jack Mang addressed the group at the May 21 meeting. Jack felt "that now would be a good time to go back to basics." How a comprehensive collection can be begun would, he felt, illustrate the essence of collecting. A number of factors were discussed with the group in regard to assembling a collection. Jack and Helen, in a slide presentation, provided a running commentary about each of the 200 netsuke from their collection. Needless to say, the Mangs have been invited back to discuss the development of their collection.

On July 16, Dr. Jay Hopkins and Dr. James Rose gave a talk entitled "Having Fun With Netsuke" focusing on building a quality collection with pieces costing under \$1,000. Members were asked to bring their netsuke for which less than \$1,000 was paid. You can well imagine the lively discussion that took place.

The NK Chapters give the collector a wonderful opportunity to share with others different points of view in establishing a collection. You are indeed fortunate if you live in an area where these chapters are located.

Look forward to seeing you in Washington.

Adele Murphy  
Membership Chairman

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## LETTERS

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With regard to James Hume's question about Joy Epstein's *Portraits of Collectors*, my feeling is that an article like the one about the Kinseys and their collection is an entirely suitable addition to the NK Study Journal. I have enjoyed the sketches, as long as they focus on collecting and not on the collector's success in the business world. I think all such articles hereafter should picture netsuke of interest to readers.

Isabel S. Cunningham  
Annapolis, Maryland

ing about them and learning how their interests in the art evolved.

When I saw Raymond Bushell's *Historical Inro* (Study Journal, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 20), I thought I had seen it before but did not know where. Then I found what I thought was the same *inro*. However, this one was in Ed Wrangham's collection and was pictured in the catalogue covering the exhibition in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. This *inro*'tho so similar is by the artist *Haku-sensai* and depicts the famous views of Lake Biwa in *togidashi* and each view is labelled.

Irene Crispo  
Monterey, California

*Family Tree* (Study Journal Vol 3, No. 2, p. 28)? The fact that I didn't until I thought about it from a Western viewpoint is an indication that I have been "too far East too long." You refer of course to the fact that *Sosui* represents himself as a twig attached to the *Soko Morita* branch instead of attaching himself to the branch of *Gyokuso*, his natural father. In traditional Japan an apprentice regards his master as a sort of father. The relationship is that of family members. It is a form of emotional adoption — often leading to legal adoption — and the bond does not dissipate when the student gains his independence. From the Japanese viewpoint it was most natural for *Sosui* to regard himself as an extension of the *Soko* line.

Raymond Bushell  
Tokyo, Japan

"Insufficiently academic" or not I feel that the *Portrait of a Collector* is a plus for the Journal. I know all the collectors Joy has interviewed but still enjoyed read-

You asked whether I noticed anything unusual in *Sosui's*

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## SOTHEBY'S

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# A DIRTY WORD: OKIMONO

By Denis Szeszler

With photographs by Michael B. Glass of items in the Harry Glass Collection

**O** *KIMONO*. A dirty word to many. How often have we all heard (or said) "Oh, its only an *okimono*?" Somehow, since the increasing popularity of collecting netsuke, the word 'only' seems to have become associated with *okimono*.

But in reality, *okimono* have a much longer and more venerable history than the netsuke that we all love. With the introduction of the *shoin-zukuri* style of architecture in Japan around the middle of the 14th C. (the style which, although somewhat simplified, is still used in traditional homes today) came the familiar *tatami* mat that even now covers most Japanese floors, a recess of shelves called the *tana* or *chigai-dana*, and most impor-



Fig. 1. Sambaso dancer *okimono*.



Fig. 2. A monkey Sambaso dancer netsuke.

tantly, the *tokonoma*. An alcove intended for the appreciation of aesthetic pleasures, the *tokonoma* usually contained a hanging scroll, a flower arrangement (*ikebana*) appropriate for the season or for the occasion, and an art object (*okimono*, or "placed thing").

The earliest *okimono* extant are made of iron, and the Japanese consider the best ones to be the ones produced by the Myochin family. Claiming descent from Takenouchi no Sukune, the prime minister of the Empress Jingo Kogo, who invaded Korea in the middle of the 3rd C., members of the Myochin family were armorers to the Japanese court for six hundred years: from the 12th C. till the end of the 18th.

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Aside from the making of superbly strong and lightweight armor, they are justly famous for developing *okimono* into a special art. Their hammerwork over all those years was superb, and their wonderfully articulated birds, dragons, snakes, and crayfish in iron are especially well appreciated by connoisseurs of art today. Obviously, the Myochins were not the only ones to produce *okimono* at such an early period: where there is a void, someone will fill it, and the fashionability of building houses with a *tokonoma* required the availability of art objects to display in it. There are many unsigned *okimono* of various materials, such as metal, wood, ivory, and pottery, dating back to several centuries before *netsuke* became art objects.

During the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) thousands of craftsmen were engaged in producing *netsuke*, a necessity, while rela-



Fig. 3. A Shibayama style netsuke of an elephant.

Fig. 4. A Shibayama style *okimono* of an elephant.





Rare miniature incense cabinet, iron inlaid with pure gold and silver. The cover shows a tiger biting the tail of a dragon (symbolizing the competition between the king of the animals of the land and the king of the animals of the sky) as well as the crest of the Tokugawa family. The sides are inlaid with landscapes, flowers, and birds. The cabinet consists of three compartments, the interior gilt silver intricately engraved with birds, flowers, and mountains, as well as a bronze incense tray inlaid in gold and silver with Mt. Fuji and cranes. Signed Komai; circa 1900.  
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Fig. 5. A monkey and child *Okimono*.

Fig. 6. A monkey and child *netsuke*.



tively few produced *okimono*. During the Meiji era which followed, however, the adoption of Western dress eliminated the need for *netsuke*, and many *netsuke-shi* turned to carving *okimono* for export. In its rush to Westernize, Japan needed to export to offset the cost of all of the railroads, machinery, and equipment it had to import from the West. Since feudal Japan had little industry, the only exportable products were art wares, and the Meiji period was a tremendous expansion in the production of such items. Considering the long history of appreciation of larger scale sculpture in the West, it is not surprising that the Japanese decided to produce many *okimono* for that market.

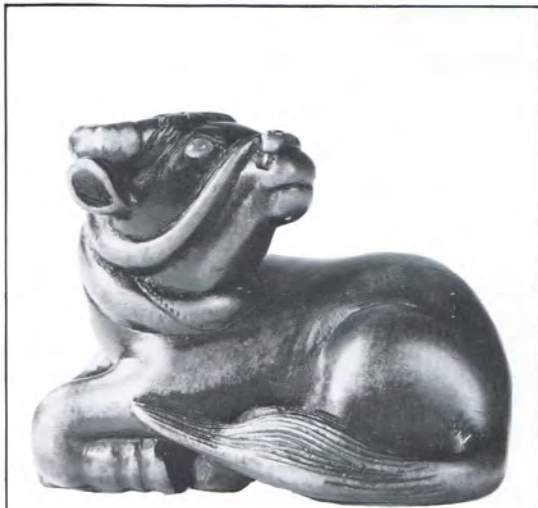
While it is unfortunately true that many of the *okimono* produced late in the 19th and early in the 20th Centuries were mass-produced and worthy of little attention, it is equally true



Fig. 7. A Shoki and oni netsuke.



Fig. 8. A Shoki and oni okimono.



An extremely fine and elegant carving of a reclining ox, eyes inlaid with light and dark horn.

Signed: *Toyokazu Tamba School*  
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that many fine sculptures were created during that period as well. As G.A. Audsley wrote in *The Connoisseur Collection of the Arts of Japan in 1884*:

“Okimono have been of late years produced in great numbers by the Japanese wood and ivory carvers; and many of them are of great merit as works of art and manipulative skill. As in the case of netsuke, their subjects and designs are almost countless. In many instances the *okimono* closely resembles the netsuke in form and treatment; but it can always be distinguished from the ornamental button by the absence of the perforations for the silk cords. . . .



Fig. 9. A mother and child netsuke.

Fig. 10. An *okimono* showing a grandfather with his grandchild.



“In the International Exhibition of 1874 there was shown an ivory skeleton, about 9 inches high, in which every bone was shown in perfect form and proportion, and every detail down to the minutest surface marking was carved with the greatest precision and fidelity to nature. Since then we have seen several works, skulls in particular, which have been pronounced by anatomists as absolutely faultless in every respect, marvels of patient study and accurate observations on the part of their carvers. . . .

“In the style of carving and general treatment of surface the ordinary ivory and wood *okimono* do not differ from netsuke, as

already described. Their larger size affords the artist greater scope for the display of his skill, but unfortunately he does not often avail himself of it in the right direction."

Those of us who are interested in netsuke would be missing a great deal of aesthetic gratification if we fail to look at *okimono* with the same criteria of quality and beauty that we apply to netsuke.

Since a sculpture meant to be placed in the *tokonoma* did not have to meet the netsuke's requirement of compactness and functionality the artist had greater freedom, and often produced magnificent small sculptures. If the quality of carving, insight, alive-

ness, and meaning are as good in an *okimono* as they are in a fine netsuke, then the size and lack of *himotoshi* should not interfere with our appreciation. Besides, *okimono* have an added attraction. Although their price, like that of everything else, has gone up in recent years, they are generally still comparatively inexpensive when matched against netsuke of equal quality. It is time that we leave off 'only' when referring to *okimono*.

I have selected five pairs of netsuke and *okimono* of similar subjects to illustrate their likeness in quality. All are 19th C. Fig. 1, a monkey Sambaso dancer netsuke with a Sambaso dancer *okimono* (fig. 2); fig. 3, a *Shibayama* style

netsuke of an elephant with a matching *okimono* (netsuke signed *Masaharu*, and *okimono* signed *Gyokuzan*) (fig. 4); fig. 5 shows a monkey and child netsuke with an *okimono* of the same subject (fig. 6); fig. 7, a Shoki and *oni* netsuke with a similar *okimono*, signed *Matsugusai* (fig. 8); and Fig. 9, a mother and child netsuke, together with an *okimono* showing a grandfather with his grandchild (fig. 10). It is my hope that after looking at these similar examples, we will all be able better to appreciate the qualities of *okimono*, rather than to wear blinders, and not see anything that does not have *himotoshi*. ■



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## Portrait of a Collector Michael Birch

Joy Epstein

**H**OW does an Englishman, by paternal descent, born in Egypt, become not only a netsuke collector but also a netsuke carver? You are about to read the fascinating story of an amazing personality — a man talented in so many areas that he smoothly functions in the financial and literary, as well as the artistic worlds of sculpture and painting. No doubt he could also make it in the theatrical field. Some persons see him as the ultimate actor, a man of many moods. He can be the entertaining and fun-loving extrovert on occasion, or the earnest intellectual discussing his poetry, or the remote introvert at other times. But unlike the actor, his roles are real, and his is a brilliant success — he is Michael Birch.

Grandfather Birch, a transplanted Englishman and cotton broker, settled in Egypt with his family. His son, Louis, grew up there, married a French girl, and continued to reside in Alexandria. Their only child, Michael, was born December 16, 1926, into a family with broad tastes in the arts but without a centralized focus. Michael's father later became a teacher of English at Cairo University, but in their home only French was spoken in deference to Michael's mother who was not fluent in English. In fact, Michael did not learn to speak English until he was twelve years old. He recalls those childhood years as interesting and loving, but it was the occasion of his ninth birthday that brought about one of the most influential

happenings of his life. It was a magic moment when his father presented him with several netsuke that he had purchased, not for a collection but as interesting art objects. Michael gazed with wonder at a pair of Darumas, a *sumo* wrestler, figures of street entertainers and a small tiger. In fact, it was probably a moment of destiny as the young boy decided he would "learn to make those things." He didn't know what a "carver" was, but he began to hunt for suitable bits of wood which he used for his first efforts. From that day to this, Michael Birch has never ceased to think about netsuke, although there would come a time when he would forego carving for a period of years.

Necessity made Michael a self-



MASANAO OF KYOTO. A powerful and expressive ivory study of an alert dog on a cushion, signed *Masanao*. From a European collection formed in the early years of this century.

There is a small sub-group of comparable dogs on cushions by *Masanao*. The two pieces discussed by Mr. Hurtig in the *INCS Journal*, vol. 10, no. 2 (September 1982), p. 56, and both now in the Guggenheim collection, are unique and quite fascinating. One, from the Severin collection, is a strange though gratifying model of a dog standing on the cushion, his body somewhat contorted, and is signed *Masanao*. The other is in comparison a weak model of a bitch and pup on the cushion, which in this case incorporates a design which may be interpreted as a cross; consequently the piece was designated a "Hidden Christian" netsuke — an intriguing but debatable proposition. The piece is unsigned but very probably attributable to *Masanao*, although interestingly the vendor originally attributed it to *Tomotada*. A third piece was illustrated on the cover of Sotheby's London auction of June 18th, 1978, and was again unsigned. The pose was more conventionally Kyoto, with the head turned back and up as the dog sat squarely on the cushion and scratched at its throat. As catalogued, this piece was probably good work by a contemporary of *Masanao's*, inspired by the master's models. A fourth, rather different piece is illustrated in the *INCS Journal*, vol. 5, no. 3 (December 1977), p. 38, in a Luigi Bandini article comparing record prices; it is on this occasion a shaggy dog on a similar cushion, convincingly signed *Masanao*.

This brief survey is instructive; as one sees so frequently with the oeuvre of this great carver, while there may be variations on a theme, to the extent that his hand is immediately recognisable in a certain type, in almost every case the conception is original and experimental, identical to no other. Our piece appears to be easily the most striking and impressive dog on cushion by *Masanao* so far recorded.



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taught artist. He has never had any formal training in the arts. His high school education ceased at the ninth grade level which seems impossible to those who have listened to him lecture or just hold forth at social gatherings. Miriam Kinsey described him best when she recently said, "He is a most articulate, marvelous intellectual." But, the youth looking for help and advice in his attempt to master netsuke carving, found assistance unavailable in Egypt in the 1930s. In fact, books on the subject were not to be found, So it is probable that the boy who taught himself to carve, and even invented a set of tools for this purpose, learned early in life to be his own teacher, regardless of the area of endeavor.

The second World War interrupted Michael's ambition to be a netsuke carver, but in December of 1945, the war over, Michael decided to leave Egypt and travel

to England, This Englishman who had never seen his homeland, went for a visit and stayed, Now the young man of twenty wanted to earn his living as a netsuke carver. His finances were so limited that he could barely afford an attic room in which to live, and he certainly did not have money to purchase any netsuke. But, realizing he had to see as many netsuke as possible, he started frequenting the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. At that time, they had one of the few netsuke collections available to the public anywhere in the world. Michael also needed ivory for his work, and once again finances were a problem until he discovered that discarded ivory billiard balls were just fine for carving and affordable. He worked steadily at carving, very much the recluse struggling to pay his rent. He did sell a few of his works — the selling price? — fifteen shillings a

piece, or approximately \$8.00 on today's market.

At the end of a year, poverty had not dampened Michael's determination to succeed as a netsuke artist, but it hadn't done much for his social life. He was alone, working, most of the time. One night, as he concentrated on carving in his room, he heard a great deal of noise emanating from the apartment below him. A party was in full swing and Michael's tolerance finally ran out. He descended the stairs full of self-righteous fury, and arriving at the offending apartment, rapped on the door. Imagine his amazement when the door was opened by a gorgeous laughing girl. Michael gazed into those blue eyes and promptly forgot what he was doing there. He just stood and stared. The young lady, thinking him a guest, took him right into the party. Needless to say, Michael gave nary a



Fig. 1. Shoji. Ivory. *Otoman*. In startling contrast to his famous tigers and his dynamic combat subjects, *Otoman*, to my amazement and delight, has produced this benign, languid, hilariously daft *sake*-goofed buffoon resting cheerfully on his empty oversized tipple-bowl. The craftsmanship is incomparable — and the humor...!



Boxwood netsuke of an extremely grumpy, tired and fully back-packed priest on the Tokaido road, wondering where his next meal is coming from.  
Late 18th C. — early 19th C., height 4 inches

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Fig. 2. Tiger and Tigress. Ivory. Tomotada. I find the perfectly conceived spiral yin/yang composition combined with the uncanny attention to detail of this piece totally satisfying. But what truly impresses me is the genius with which Tomotada has observed and captured the close relationship between the tiger, with his forepaw resting protectively on her flank, and the tigress nestling beside him, submissive, playfully relaxed, trusting. I have not seen any work of art which expresses tenderness more movingly.

thought to his netsuke carving that night. And so he met Margaret, herself a guest at the party, who became Mrs. Birch one year later in December of 1948. Maggie recalls that when Michael proposed he said "I can't promise you very much money or wealth, but I do promise you will never be bored." They have been married thirty-four years and Maggie says he has kept this word. Life with Michael has never had a boring minute!

At the time the Birches met, it was Maggie who had steady employment. She was a chorus girl at the Duke of York theater in London's West End. After their marriage, Maggie encouraged Michael to go on with his netsuke carving career and she continued working at the theater.

The arrangement was fine until Maggie announced that they would soon be a family. Michael chuckles as he tells how "the pregnant chorus girl" retired from the glamour of the footlights to become a full time mother. That was the first of what were to be five children for the Birches. As a family man he had to change his life style completely. Michael packed away his netsuke tools and became a dishwasher in a restaurant, the first of many jobs. At one point, he thought he might try show business. With that in mind, he put together a cabaret act that had a little bit of everything; singing, comedy, even tap-dancing (Maggie did the coaching there). Unfortunately, the nightclub act came to a close in 1952 when the

club owner was murdered and Michael decided to move on to a less flamboyant career. He next found a job making eye-glass frames by hand. After that came an opportunity to design the frames with another firm. He spent two years with this company and then decided to start his own frame production. Michael Birch, employee, became Michael Birch, employer. With Maggie's consent, he built the first workshop in their home. Fifteen years later, he not only had his own group of companies but employed about two thousand persons! With the growth of his business came financial success, and finally the means to start collecting netsuke. While Michael did not carve netsuke through those business years, he

*continued page 21*

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A rare and richly patinated 18th Century wood study of a "Shi Shi on Ball." A powerful and bold execution that is yet extremely well defined.

Size: 5.5 cm. x 3 cm.



Fig. 3. Oni as Rat-catcher. Ivory. *Masaka*. The oni traps an octopus under his hat, while the rat runs over his shoulder — yet the action is not frozen in time, as in a photograph or an over labored carving. *Masaka* has achieved a remarkable sense of narrative continuity in this netsuke — he conveys what happened before and what is about to take place. This is one of the most mobile carvings I have ever seen.

never lost his love of this art form. In 1964 he began attending auctions and buying for the first time. Michael Birch, the collector, emerged.

In 1969 Michael reached a turning point in his life. He was a very successful business man who unfortunately was not doing what he really wanted. The nine year old boy's dream of becoming a netsuke carver was still the man's dream. How could he hope to make this dream a reality? The answer for Michael was to sell his business and become a full time artist once again. He had not carved for the fifteen years he was an entrepreneur, and he was impatient to begin. This time, the artist was also a collector, a unique overlapping of roles that certainly enhanced his artistic talents. The Birch collection gained magnitude thanks to another fortunate event which coincided with the sale of his business — the famous Hindson netsuke auctions at Sotheby's in London. Firmly believing in the future of netsuke as an art form. Michael acquired a substantial number of

top pieces from the sale, as well as from other auctions and dealers. But, unlike the average collector, he had a double purpose in purchasing netsuke; one was simply for the "pure enjoyment of collecting those beautiful objects," but the second reason was for Michael Birch the artist. Michael explains it this way, "I wanted to examine at close quarters the broadest possible range of quality — good, bad, indifferent — in order to restore my hand at carving. I started by repairing a few badly damaged pieces I bought at auction. It was an excellent training for a brief period and served to limber up the fingers." By 1970, he had acquired an unusual and fine collection of several hundred pieces.

Michael Birch, the artist, approaches collecting from the point of view that the most important pieces in his collection do not necessarily reflect the greatest provenance, nor are they always the most expensive. He has also discovered that, "When I have absorbed a piece in terms

of artistic enjoyment, I can happily sell that piece in order to acquire another." A case in point was his purchase from Christie's in London in the late 1970's, of a famous grazing horse by *Okatomo* — hammer price approximately \$27,000.00. It was a record price for a netsuke at that time and a price suggested by the press to be madness. Michael, the collector, thrilled to ownership of this masterpiece. He proceeded to "absorb" it completely, and then a few years later he sold it. In 1981, at a private sale in Hawaii, it was sold again for a reputed \$120,000.00. Did Michael regret having let the piece go so soon? Not a bit. As a collector, he has always been willing "to go all out for a top piece," and, if the time came when he decided to sell a netsuke, he never looked back in regret.

In a recent interview, Michael explained his role as a collector and vocation as a carver. "The two interface with each other to a very important degree. Being a carver has given me, I believe, an insight into other carvers' works



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# ISHIKAWA KOMEI

(1852-1912)

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IN COMMEMORATION of the visit of their Majesties, the Emperor and Empress of Japan to the United States in 1975, the Imperial Household Agency published a catalogue entitled *Art Treasures from the Imperial Collection*. One of the art objects illustrated was an ivory figure, *Falconer*, (see opposite page), carved by *Ishikawa Komei*, 1852-1912. The figure is an *okimono* 37.8 cm. (about 15½ inches) in height.

**I**SHIKAWA KŌMEI was born at Asakusa in Edo (Tokyo), in a family of *miya-bori* (wood carving for architectural ornament of Shinto shrines). He studied painting under Kanō Sosen and ivory carving under Kikukawa Masamitsu, and was good also at wood carving which was a hereditary job of his family. His ability in ivory carving is evidenced by the fact that the "Gyoran Kannon" which he exhibited at the Second Industrial Fair in 1881 was awarded with a prize. The *Report of the Fair* published at the time commented on his work, together with other pieces of ivory carving, as follows: "Currently ivory sculpture, like flowers of spring bursting forth from their buds, is seeing the birth of new designs day by day thanks to good ideas of respective carvers. The art is believed to achieve increasingly thriving activity year after year." Works of Japanese ivory sculpture were much in favor especially by foreigners during the Meiji period, and were exported in abundance after around 1877.

*Kōmei*, like *Takamura Kōun*, was appointed professor of the Sculpture Department of the Tokyo Art School, and was nominated a Court Artist. This figure of a falconer exhibits the subtle, warm and graceful effect characteristic of ivory carving.

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I requested permission of the Imperial Household Chamberlain to reproduce the illustration and the biographical data which is much fuller than that given in the *The Netsuke Handbook* (Biography 350). Permission was generously granted for reprinting in the *Study Journal of the Netsuke Kenkyukai*.

Raymond Bushell

and motivations, and being a collector has, I know, broadened the scope of my own carving. Therefore, each activity has heightened my appreciation and understanding of the other." As a collector, he has developed a number of criteria which he looks for in buying a netsuke and which he also seeks to achieve in his own work: 1) imaginative interpretation of subject, 2) an obedience to the rules of fitness for purpose, 3) a high degree of skill in execution, 4) the artist's respect for his own work. These guidelines can be seen in the examples pictured, superb netsuke from the Birch Collection and graphically described by Michael.

Michael returned to his profession as an artist in 1970. He worked with dedication and intensity. He also had a goal in mind — a one man show of his work. The dream was achieved

in 1976 at the Eskenazi Gallery in London. The show was a sellout and Michael Birch became a new star in the netsuke galaxy. He is recognized today as one of the world's most creative living artists. Knowledgeable experts describe his work as possessing a flowing elegance. His netsuke are much sought after and highly prized. Michael says he produces between six to fifteen pieces a year, depending on the complexity of the carving and the number he rejects during various working stages. Netsuke carving takes infinite patience and time. It begins with a concept. Most artists make a sketch or drawing at this stage, but Michael usually chooses instead to think about the subject until he has the completed picture in his mind. Only then, does he begin to carve the material that will be finished work. Over several years he may do three or four interpretations of

the same subject. He sometimes prefers the later works because he has had "time to explore the subject more fully." However, although the theme may be the same, he uses different materials, and his pieces are one of a kind. And yes, he does have a favorite material. "Ivory," says a serious Michael, "has just the right degree of balance between resistance and yield." A slight pause ensued in which time a sly twinkle appeared in those light blue eyes as he followed up with, "Does that sound erotic!"

Michael Birch is a multi-talented man; a creative artist of fine and delicate *sumie* paintings, a sculptor of large works, a poet of wit, a raconteur, a gourmet cook, as well as a brilliant netsuke carver. So, where is the conceit, the demanding demeanor often exhibited by such talented personalities? It is nowhere in evidence. The spirit that emerges is one of



Fig. 4. Monkey group. Ivory. *Kaigyokusai Masatsugu*. To me he is the Master and this beautiful piece (of which, also, I have seen some grim copies) epitomizes the great man's prodigious mastery of his subject matter. The interesting relationship and forms are superbly balanced — while the dead accurate realism becomes the purest form of abstraction — the quintessence of the creatures depicted.



Fig. 5. Small Boy. Ivory. *Kawara Ryo*. This little boy playing at his make-believe in borrowed grown-up's clothes is, for me, every little boy — my own son, my grandsons — portrayed with great artistry, insight, and affection."





Fig 6. Fishergirl and Octopus. Ivory. Minkoku. The girl's daintily ambivalent response to coition with the octopus must be one of the most difficult subjects for a carver to depict without being coy or just plain horrid. *Minkoku* has been delicately explicit, infinitely subtle, and he has managed (I wish I knew how) to achieve the gentlest eroticism in his complex interpretation.

warmth and caring and deep sensitivity. When Michael made his first trip to Japan, in 1975, he was apprehensive about his reception from the Japanese netsuke carvers whom he had never met. He need not have worried. The Japanese artists found Japanese spirit in that Englishman. "There was instant rapport," according to Bob Kinsey, a close friend who introduced Michael to the Japanese artists. "They made him an honorary member of their elite group." That, to Michael, was the most meaningful reward of his career.

Michael Birch, collector-artist, dwells today in the beautiful hill country of Kent, England. His heart belongs to collecting fine netsuke by carvers of all generations, while his mind and fingers strive to create a few jewels to add to the world's treasures. ■

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See Neil Davey's "Netsuke" on page 75.

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# Please Take My Kokusais

Anonymous

## Part I

The photographs herein represent only about half of those submitted by our anonymous contributor. The balance will appear in the next issue of our Study Journal.

Frances Numano is one of my oldest and dearest friends. As well as I know her I am unable to decide whether she is really a collector. She likes flat pieces — sometimes so thin they are only two dimensional. She also likes odd and distorted pieces, but, most of all, she likes Kokusai for his rare and genuine whimsy.

Isn't that enough, you will say, to call her a collector? I would agree except that she collects without acquisitiveness, without a trace of greed, no matter how enticing the netsuke, no matter how deeply she loves it. Should someone make the typical collector's remark that he wishes he had been first to see the piece her instant response is, "Please take it," without thought of payment or price. My quandary in classifying her is that an "unpossessive collector" is a contradiction in terms.

Her gift-giving is part and parcel of all her relationships. It is as essential to her happiness as is a passport to a traveler. Never mind that her many friends love her for herself alone; she must share the joy of the inevitable gift she bears. Considering her propensity of giving things away I am torn between my love for netsuke and my desire to be a better man. How can I take her netsuke while it is so easy? How can I deprive her of something she cherishes? I try to convince myself that taking her netsuke is "alright" because hers is a pure generosity containing no element of self-deprivation — but it won't hold. She enjoys her netsuke and, equally, she enjoys others enjoying them. She does not consider the actual ownership. I am relieved that she has few netsuke that I covet exceedingly; otherwise I should be involved in great moral struggles.

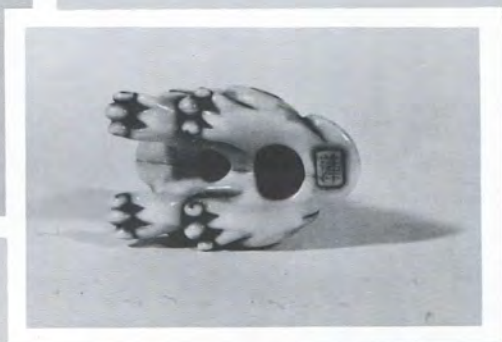
How powerful a shield is her vulnerability! It protects her from my rapacious acquisitiveness. Even tough dealers who contend daily for larger profits succumb to her absence of guile, her ingenuousness. They voluntarily give her better bargains than they do "old customers" like me. Besides they gladly scour the market to find netsuke to her taste, while claiming that such activity, even for "big" customers like me, is "unprofitable."

She enjoyed the articles about Kokusai by Paul Moss in the *Netsuke Kenkyukai Study Journal* and his *Eccentrics in Netsuke*. She showed me the Kokusais she had acquired during the last couple of years. To put the matter succinctly I was astonished by their number, their variety and quality. I marveled that she acquired them in my own backyard, so to speak, and under my very nose.

She herself shuns the limelight, however dim or indirect, but she has agreed to let me use her Kokusais for this article. To the roster of those collectors — Anne Hull Grundy, Paul Moss, Richard Silverman, etc. — who have made their Kokusais available in large numbers for observations, comparisons, evaluations and conclusions, must now be added the name of Frances Numano.

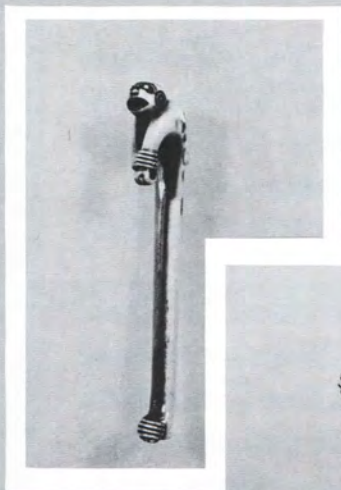


*Shishi. Ivory. Signed: Ren (sai).*



*Shishi on stand Ivory. Signed: Ren (sai).  
The shishi's eyes are inlaid.*





Short arm, long leg monkey.

Stag antler.

Sashi type. Signed: Koku (sai)  
in square seal form.

Length 11.5 cm. A similar model  
from the Richard Silverman collection  
is illustrated in *Eccentrics in Netsuke*,  
p. 130.



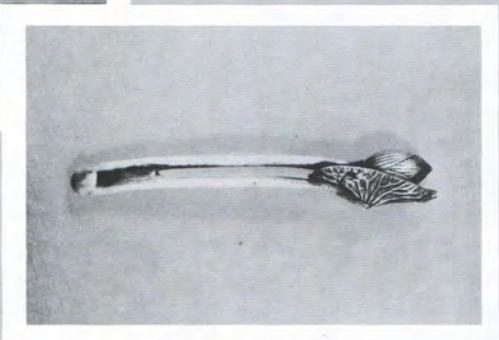
Stag antler. Signed: Koku (sai).  
The figure represents religious meditation, the lotus position.  
The character on the coin face is Zen, meaning good or  
virtuous.



Dancing Fox. Stag antler.  
Height 5.3 cm.



Lotus bud and leaf. Oki-hasami type.  
Stag antler. Signed: Koku (sai).  
Length 14,8 cm.

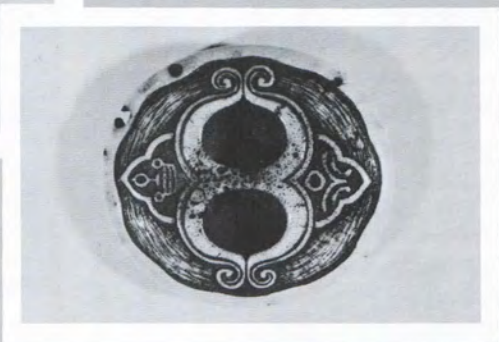




Coin-shaped manju. Ivory.  
Signed: Koku (sai). The inscription on the face, Hi No Yōjin, means Watch Out For Fire. The inscription on the reverse Zen Hō Aku Zai, means Virtue (is) Treasure, Evil (is) Sin.



Stylized Bat. Stag antler.  
Flat manju. Signed: Kokusai.



Manju. Stag antler.  
Signed: Koku (sai). The character tsubo, within the jar shaped reserve stands for the jar itself, which is a tsubo.

*Arabesque and signature designs. Stag antler.  
Ryusa type in two parts. Signed: Kokusai.*

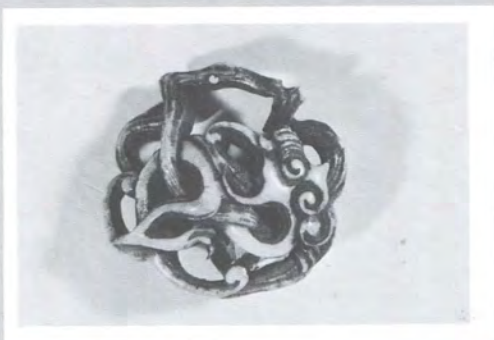


*Stylized Rain Dragon. Stag antler.  
Flat manju. Signed: Koku (sai).  
The manju is a solid block, but cleverly treated to simulate  
two pieces.*



*Stylized Rain Dragon (Amarjū). Stag antler.  
Ryusa type in two parts, lid and bowl.  
Signed: Koku (sai) on inside surface of bowl part.*





*Stylized Rain Dragon. Stag antler.  
Cut-out manju. Signed: Koku (sai) on a tiny inlaid  
label (See Signature detail).*

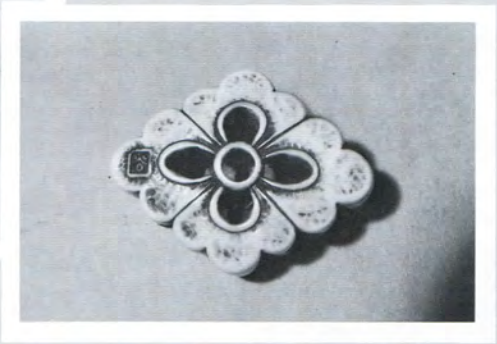
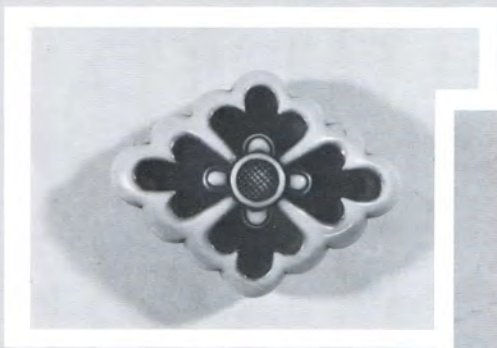


*Stylized bat, stylized clouds. Stag antler.  
Ryusa type in tow parts, lid and bowl.  
Signed: Koku (sai) on underside of lid.*



*Stylized Rain Dragon and Signature Designs.  
Marine ivory. Ryusa type, lid and bowl.  
Signed: Kokusai.*

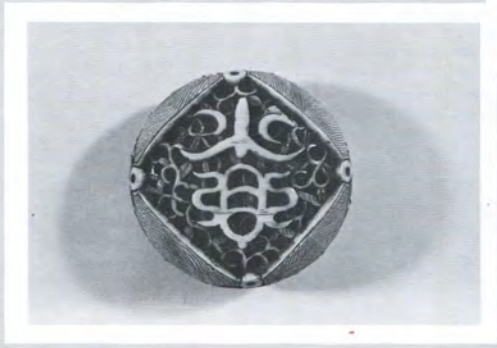




*Abstract designs. Ivory.  
Signed: Koku (sai). Ryusa type.*

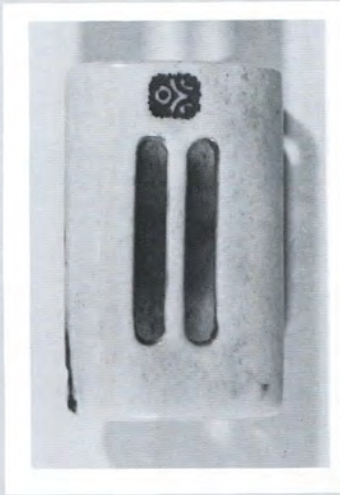


*Stylized Rain Dragon and Buddhist priest's scepter (nyo-i). Stag antler and ivory.  
Signed: Koku (sai). The lid is stag antler and carved as a ryusa type. The bowl is ivory, the nyoi and signature carved on the bottom, without perforations.*



*Walrus ivory. Ryusa type.  
The kanji design on the face may be reasonably read as the single character Ranku meaning 'Pleasure.' A little less reasonably, the elements of the kanju may be transposed and read upside-down as Koku with a fanciful rendition of the square box element. The design on the reverse symbolizes wealth (kin sen ryō - 100 ryō gold), music, poetry and tea.*





*Stylized dragon and jewels of Buddha (tama) on clouds in separate circular reserves.*

*Stag antler. Tubular shape.*

*Signed: Koku (sai).*

*See Collectors' Netsuke, Fig. 223, for a similar shape and design signed Homin.*



*Lizard forming from smoke of fire-box (hibachi).  
Stag antler. Signed: Rensai.*



*Shishi Resting on Chinese altar table.  
Stag antler. Signed: Ren (sai).  
shishi's eyes are inlaid.*

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# JAPANESE DANCE: A PRIMER FOR THE NETSUKE COLLECTOR

by Michael R. Bernstein

## Introduction

This article is intended to introduce the art collector, specifically the netsuke collector, to the major forms of Japanese dance. One of the great pleasures obtainable from collecting Japanese art is immersion in the rich and wondrous culture of Japan, a culture abounding in dance forms which encapsulate the religion, the mythology, the morality and the humor of the Japanese people.

Japan developed a dance tradition classic, regional, and folk, uninfluenced by Western dance until the late 19th C. This article will trace Japanese dance through the centuries, with a special emphasis on *kabuki*, since *kabuki* often is the source of the characters portrayed in Japanese art, particularly art of the Meiji Period. The aim of this article is two-



Photo courtesy of Sotheby's

Fig. 1. Inlaid wood netsuke of a New Year's Sambaso dancer. Note the hat with its twelve sections symbolizing the months and the circle on the hat symbolizing the sun. 19th C.



Photo courtesy of Sotheby's

Fig. 2. Another model of a Sambaso dancer, this one by Tomochika. 19 C. Ivory and wood, note the black okina mask with the white spots.

fold: 1) to introduce Japanese dance to the uninitiated; 2) to enhance appreciation of Japanese art, especially netsuke, by promoting an awareness of subject matter and emotional content of dance-related artworks.

## Historical Development of Japanese Dance

As in all cultures, the earliest Japanese dances were mystical and designed to lure animals for the hunters, fish for the fisherman, to petition the gods, or to exorcise evil spirits. The original solo dancers were probably *shamans*.

Mythologically, the first dance was performed by Okame, the Goddess of Mirth, comically stamping on an inverted tub before the cave into which Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, had sealed herself in a fit of rage. Curious to see what the racket

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Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Fig. 3 and 4. An incomparable netsuke of a Noh dancer in the role of Ranryo. This tour-de-force is by *Yoshihide (Hoshu)*, a late 19 C. Tokyo school master whose work, though rarer, rivals *Tokoku's* finest inlay pieces. The netsuke is of different colored lacquered woods replete with colored inlays and an ivory face beneath the mask — a masterpiece. (Author's collection)

Fig. 5. Nō dancer as Hannya, the demon. Painted boxwood with ivory mask by *Nagamachi Shuzan*, 18 C. (Author's collection)

Fig. 6. The only known *kozuka* by the great metalworker *Shiko Tiekani (Sadamoto)*. *Shibuchi* plate of dark gray. This *kozuka* depicts the story of the most famous *kagura*. Amaterasu at the top has been lured out of her cave by the dancing of Okame. At the center is Taji Kara who kept Amaterasu from returning to the cave.



Fig. 6

was about, Amaterasu left her cave and was persuaded by the other gods and goddesses to stay out and let the Earth have sun again.

This fabled dance of Okame became the prototype for *kagura*, Shintō religious dances, performed in a small area and with movements focused down to the earth. The *kagura* were danced for the gods by *miko*, priestesses, at Shintō shrines. *Miko* can be recognized by their white kimonos and long red skirts.

The next major dance form in Japan was the *Gigaku*, imported from Korea by way of South China in the early 7th C. *Gigaku* as a form has been lost and all

that remain are the huge, grotesque masks that were worn by the dancers. These masks have been immortalized in netsuke by *Tessai* and his followers, especially *Tetsuro*. The *shishimai* dance, of which more later, is thought to be derived from *Gigaku*.

*Bugaku* was imported from the Asian Continent, and with the sponsorship of the Imperial Court, flourished along with its accompanying music, called *gagaku*. There are two major types of *bugaku* — *umai* (right dance) and *samai* (left dance), which depend on the original country of the music's origin.

*Bugaku* is a complex, majes-

tic, masculine mime based mainly on heavy foot movements. It is a solemn, hypnotic, silent dance that always has been the preserve of the aristocracy and even today usually is performed only under Imperial sponsorship by official dancers.

In contrast, *sangaku*, an import from China, evolved into a dance for the common folk, replete with acrobatics, pantomime, and puppetry. Arising simultaneously with *sangaku* was *dengaku*, a festive, plebian dance form native to Japan. One can recognize a *dengaku* dancer by the drums hanging from the waist, the *binzasara* (a type of castinet), and the costume of gold brocade

continued page 38



Fig. 7. Dengaku dancers. Ivory by Tessui, early to mid-19th C. A very rare subject. Note the drum, brocaded pants, overgarment, and straw hat. (Author's collection)



Fig. 8. Glazed 19th C. porcelain netsuke of a boy holding a shishimai mask over head.

Photo courtesy of Sotheby's

with an overgarment and a straw hat. *Dengaku* later evolved into a more complex dramatic form, *Nogaku*, as late as the 16th C.

The *kusemai*, the favored dance of the *samurai*, was a stately, simple dance performed with a fan telling an epic tale to the accompaniment of drums and a narrative song.

*Nogaku* and *kusemai* were direct predecessors of *nō*. The *nō*, with its intricate masks and heroic stories became a distinct form due to the inspiration of the dramas of Kanami (1333-1384) and Zeami (1365-1445). *Nō* is a dance of excruciatingly slow, stylized movements danced to the music of flute, drum, and narrative song, usually telling stories of the invisible realm of the gods.

The costumes often are made of magnificent brocade worn with wood masks. The main prop is the fan. *Nō* still is seen regularly in Japan's cities. A *nō* subject seen in netsuke is the dancer with a *kitsune* (fox) mask from the *nō* dance in which Inari Sama, the Fox God, descends to Earth to aid the great swordsmith, Munehika, in forging a sacred blade for the Emperor. Another *nō* subject seen at times in netsuke is Ranryo, the mythical Chinese general whose huge, gro-

tesque mask when worn in battle made him invincible. Predictably, *nō* was a favorite of the elite and rarely seen by the common folk.

It seems that, as in the West, Japan always has had a high culture and a low culture. Concurrent with the development of refined *nō* was the development of the raucous dance called *furyu*. This was a street dance performed by a procession of fashionably dressed participants. *Furyu* was the forerunner of the *Odori*, folk dances, the most notable of which is the *bon-Odori* dance performed during a four day period centering around July 15 (August 15 in localities where the lunar calendar prevailed). From the thirteenth to the sixteenth, the souls of the dead are said to return to their ancestral homes. The *bon* dance is done either as a processional or as a circle dance with a few drummers and flutists in the middle to welcome, entertain, and bid farewell to the visiting souls. (A most amusing netsuke subject is the Nio and *oni* fraternizing during the *O-bon* festival when there is peace and fellowship even between the demons and the temple guardians.)

A curious folk dance is the *kankan*. A dance was performed



Photo courtesy of Sotheby's

Fig. 9. A satirical Kyoto school ivory netsuke by Yoshimasa depicting an octopus in the role of a *diamyō* in a *kusemai* dance.

in Osaka at the Araki Theater to the accompaniment of Chinese instruments and a song called *kankanno*. The *kankan* dance (not related to the French cancan) with its frenzied, jubilant movement was so popular that the troupe performed in Nagoya, then Edo. The dance became a craze



Fig. 10 An ivory netsuke by *Morita Soko* of an actor in the role of *Okina* for the *kabuki* play *Ayatsuri Sambaso*.

among the people and was danced everywhere, including in the streets. In February 1822 the authorities banned the *kankan*, but it continued to be danced secretly.

### Kabuki

The grand culmination of all Japanese dance is *kabuki* dance. *Nō* is the essence of restraint,

while most *kabuki* is the quintessence of dramatic expression. *Kabuki* is performed by actors in a show, but from the early 19th C. on usually by women outside the theater.

At first, *kabuki* was performed by female troupes, but due to problems with prostitution, females were barred from the *kabuki* stage and succeeded by *Wakashu* ("sister boys") in all male and female roles. Prostitution likewise led to the banning of *Wakashu kabuki*. After 1652, only adult men were allowed to play female roles. These female impersonators, *oyama* or *onnagata*, perfected their craft by living as women offstage as well as on. In the dance drama of *kabuki*, the *oyama* were the principals.

As mentioned before, when *kabuki* is done outside the context of a play as a pure dance recitation, typically there is a reversal and all roles, including men's, are done by women; but, fascinatingly, the women dance

the womens' roles in stylistic duplication of the *oyama* (shades of the movie, "*Victor, Victoria*").

There are many types of *kabuki* dance. Here only two of the most popular will be mentioned. First, the *hengemono* ("phantasmagoric dance"), a dance in which the dancer may play up to a dozen roles by lightning fast changes of costume and mien done on stage. These generally are spectacular, thrilling plays. Second, the *mat-subamemono* ("pine-background dance"). This *kabuki* form rose to popularity during the Meiji period as a reflection of the desire to elevate *kabuki* from a courtesan dance to a more elegant, ethereal form by introducing elements of the more noble *nō*, including its pine backdrop.

### Costume in Kabuki

It is enlightening for the Japanese art collectors to be aware of *kabuki* costumes and the main *kabuki* characters. Therefore, these will be discussed.

Costumes in *kabuki* are an



Front view



Back view

Ivory group of 9 masks. Signed: *Chounsai Hidechika*.

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Fig. 11 A set of 15 miniature *gigaku* masks by *Tetsuro*. Early 20th C. A homage by *Tetsuro* to his teacher *Tessai*, who devoted himself to the preservation of the heritage of *gigaku* masks.

integral part of the dance, their lines being emphasized much the way the dancer's body lines are focused upon in classical ballet. *Kabuki* dancers are dressed in the garb of the period of the play and, as mentioned, by turning the garments inside out or by tearaways, character changes are effected.

The two most important props

(*machimono*) are the *sensu* (folding fan) and the *tenugai* (Japanese towel). One or two fans may be used to signify attitude; as a representation of an article (sake cup, mirror, sword, etc.); or as nature (wind, rain, waves, etc.). The fan has the crest of the dancer's school and sometimes his rank. The *tenugai* is used for different types of disguises and

hats indicating such roles as unrequited lover, sick person, beau, or warrior to the knowing viewer.

#### Plot Summaries of the Most Popular *Kabuki* Dance Dramas

Here a summary of each of the most frequently performed *kabuki* dance dramas is given. This information is useful since it can





help the collector to recognize some of the *kabuki* characters seen in artworks. Actors in *kabuki* roles are an especially common subject in Ukiyo-e. The metalworkers who made the *kagamibuta* also frequently depicted the *kabuki* idols of the day. No doubt these pieces had great appeal to an adoring audience.

**a. Dojoji (1753)**

This is a frequent netsuke subject, having been done by artists from *Minko* to *Meigyokusai*. The jilted maiden Kiyohime transforms herself into a giant serpent and coils around the temple bell under which her beloved, the student priest, Anchin, is hiding. The heat of her fury reduces Anchin and the bell to ashes.

At the dedication of a new belfry, the spirit of Kiyohime appears as a dancing girl, gets under the bell, metamorphizes into a snake, and is vanquished by a brave warrior.

**b. Kagami Jishi (1893)**

Yayoi, a servant girl, preparing for the New Year is handling a toy lion head. She becomes possessed by the lion spirit and reappears on the stage as a regal lion with a long flowing mane which is furiously tossed about.

Kagami Jishi is a formalization of Echigo Jishi, a street dance performed at the New Year by dancers from Echigo Province who traveled to Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, and other large cities. The dancer wore a lion mask, often with a flowing mane, a beggar's cloth over his body, beat a drum on his chest, and carried a branch of peony flowers while performing a most spirited dance. Most netsuke collectors have seen this subject portrayed as the *shishi-mai* dancer.

Also, at New Year's, individuals dressed as *shishi-mai* dancers and wore a lion mask with rooster feathers or twisted paper strips for a mane. The dancer goes door-to-door and performs a simple dance to exorcise demons in return for alms. These New Year's mummers, known as *Manzai* dancers, also may be seen wearing the masks of Hyotoko, Okame, or Okina.

**c. Fuji Musume (1826)**

A graceful dance in which an *onnagata* on stage or a female in dance recital represents the spirit of wisteria flowers.

**d. Ayatsuri Sambasō (1853)**

The characters are three old

men, Okina, Senzai, and Sambasō. Okina and Senzai dance routinely, while Sambasō dances as a marionette whose invisible strings are pulled by the *kōken* (stage assistant) — a comical dance.

This *kabuki* dance has its roots in the Sambasō dance dating back to the 9th C. One of the traditional Sambasō dancers wears a white mask of Okina, the Old Man, with black spots, while the other wears a black mask of Okina with white spots. The Sambasō dancer holds a fan and wears a black lacquered conical hat decorated with a red circle, representing the sun, and twelve sections representing the months. The symbolism of the hat undoubtedly has an early ceremonial religious reference. The ultimate portrayal of a Sambasō dancer in netsuke is by *Kaigyokusai Masatsugu*, a dynamic model of a Sambasō dancer done in dark wood with a white ivory Okina mask.

**e. Sagi Musume (1762)**

The story tells how a crane in the guise of an innocent country girl is jilted, becomes a reckless wanton in the city, and then ends up as a tortured soul in hell.

**f. Shio-Kumi (1811)**

Matsukaze, a fisherwoman, draws brine to make salt. Wearing the *eboshi* (ceremonial cap) and *kariginu* (court costume) of her deceased lover who had been exiled to her village, and carrying water pails, she cuts a noble, sorrowful figure.

**g. Mitsuman Komori (1829)**

A young girl with a baby on her back, carrying a spray of bamboo grasses, holding three masks makes her way down the road. First she dons the mask of Okame, Goddess of Mirth and does a comically lascivious dance; then the mask of Ebisu, God of Wealth, and does a gay dance; then the mask of Hyotoko, the "salt-blower" and does a buffoon's dance; finally all three masks are alternated rapidly.

#### h. Momiji-Gari (1887)

On a foliage-viewing trip, General Koremochi and his companions are enchanted by the dance of a lovely princess. In a dream, the mountain god warns the general that the princess is really a demon in disguise. Upon the general's awakening, a battle ensues and in the *hikenuki* (quick costume changes) the princess transforms herself into the demon and Koremochi slays her.

#### i. Tsuchi-Gumo (1881)

Raikō Minamoto goes with his followers to view the autumn maples. He feels sick, and then a monk named Chichū, who is really a spider in metamorphosis, appears and is asked to pray for Raikō. The monk then casts cobwebs over Raikō who is on his sick bed. Raikō's retainers pursue him, and now in his true form as a spider, he casts cobwebs over the *samurai*, but they finally slay him.

#### j. Sanja Matsuri (1832)

This is a play in which the

brothers Hamanari and Takanari, fishermen, receive a heavenly directive and proceed to found the Asakusa Kannon Temple.

#### k. Yasuna (1818)

Yasuna Abe, a soothsayer, becomes deranged after the death of his fiancée. He roams the countryside, plays with butterflies, and pathetically dances alone in a field.

#### l. Yuki (1780)

A story of a *geisha* who enters a nunnery after she is jilted by the man she loves. She lies alone on her bed in the dead of winter and laments her lost lover. Yuki is the most sophisticated of the *geisha* dances, a classical form which still can be seen in Japan in performance at restaurants and nightclubs.

In the traditional *geisha* dance, most of the movement comes from the upper body in order to accommodate to a small space and not stir up dust around food.

#### Western Style Dance

Post-World War II, classical

ballet and modern dance have become very popular in Japan. However, the Japanese often insert elements of their own dance tradition into Western choreography. The *kagura*, *nō*, *kabuki*, *Odori*, and Western dance all form a part of the culture in a country where dance always has flourished.

#### Conclusion

Dancers are represented widely in the collectible Japanese art forms—*netsuke*, *inro*, masks, sword furnishings, prints, paintings, *surimoni*, *okimono*, and dolls. (Recently, Asia House in New York had a stunning show of twenty-two clay *hakata* dolls hand painted and richly dressed in stances of Japanese modern and classical dance by the living master dollmaker, *Testusaburo Nishito*.) The connoisseur can derive great pleasure from identifying the dance, and the feeling intrinsic to the dance that the artist is conveying in any type of artwork. ■

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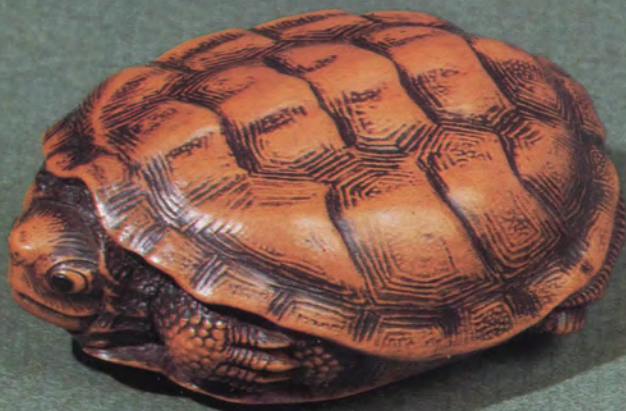
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Wood tortoise.  
Signed: *Goho, Iwami School* 18th century.  
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Oriental Art

**Foxglove House**  
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**166 Piccadilly**  
**London W1V 9DE**  
Telephone: 01-493 5464/5  
Cables: Eskenazi London W1

**15 Via Montenapoleone**  
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Telephone: 70 00 22