



根付研究会

NETSUKE KENKYUKAI

Study Journal
Volume 4, Number 1, 1984



Perhaps the most important netsuke ever recorded by *TANAKA MINKO*. This magnificent horse, which is a rare subject for this Tsu School master, is rendered in boxwood instead of the few recorded in ebony. The overall quality of carving is exceptional. Eighteenth century. Length 1¾".



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Photo by Michael B. Glass



Cover:
Hibernating frog, emerging in the spring. Deeply stained ivory. Signed by Kodo, contemporary artist.

Collection of Robert and Miriam Kinsey.

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NETSUKE KENKYUKAI

Study Journal

Volume 4, Number 1 Spring 1984

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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.

FROM YOUR EDITOR

This column should be headed FROM YOUR CO-EDITOR, although, at this early juncture, I feel more like a sub-, than a co-editor. But having always been in love with the English language and enamored of its felicitous use, I find the act of editing for publication a pleasure - - perhaps not pure pleasure, but a fair approximation thereof.

More challenging is the quest for good material, and here I believe we can and should tap the resources of some of the foreign collectors and experts in addition to our growing corps of domestic aficionados. It is im-

portant to keep our standards of quality of both content and presentation at as high a level as possible - - and to keep in mind that we are a *study* journal. Here I cannot resist the opportunity to remind you that the work of your editorial board, split as it is among Tulsa, New York, and Los Angeles, is strictly a labor of love, with no staff, paid or otherwise, as yet in evidence. If we drop the ball occasionally, be tolerant, knowing that we feel worse about our lapses than you do.

Because netsuke collectors seem more and more to be widening their areas of interest into related

fields, such as inro and pipe cases, which are ineluctably and intimately involved with the use of netsuke, we plan to offer occasional articles on these subjects. At this writing, we expect the summer issue to carry articles about Japanese lacquer, including a definitive glossary of lacquer terms, and the first comprehensive listing of makers of pipe cases.

By the time this reaches you, perhaps I will be closer to the co-editor status that Bob McGowen so graciously accords me. I am happy to be aboard.

Virginia G. Atchley

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



James Hume

I am extremely proud to announce that we are setting up our first European Study Group Chapter, which will operate out of London, England. As you know, London is historically the Netsuke Capital of the world. Mr. Karol Ashken has agreed to take on the task of organizing this Chapter. Karol is well known and well liked in European nestuke

circles. He has some excellent ideas and I feel confident that under his direction our activities in Europe will increase considerably. Our ambition is to expand in 1985 with a Chapter in Continental Europe.

A big vote of thanks goes out to those loyal members who had enough faith in the organization to renew their membership in spite of the significant cost increase. During the first quarter of 1984, almost 200 memberships were up for renewal and most of you have renewed. There have been only two dropouts, and many new members. At this rate, we are well on our way to success.

The Summer issue of our Study Journal will be expanded and will include inside color, featuring lacquer. This expansion is made possible by your continued support.

Other projects which are underway include:

- Binder for back issues of the Study Journal.
- Membership Directory (90% complete).
- Revised Constitution — I am still seeking a member (attorney?) who will take on the task of revising our Constitution so we can have it printed and distributed to our members. Volunteers????.....Please!!!!

We need a volunteer to take on the task of drumming up potential new advertisers. Advertising is an important source of revenue for the Study Journal, and our expansion plans require additional advertisers. Since most of our members collect other forms of Oriental art, we want to expand with advertisers of other art forms. I need one or more individuals to take on this task of contacting potential advertisers and soliciting ads. Volunteers??Please!!!!

We have introduced a new BUSINESS CARD FORMAT ADVERTISEMENT for only \$400 for four consecutive insertions. We expect this to be a popular way for advertisers to reach our membership all over the world at an extremely low cost. For further information on our advertising policy, write to me at Netsuke Kenkyukai Advertising, P.O. Box 309, Monroe, CT 06468, U.S.A.

Best Wishes and Happy Collecting !

James Hume

LETTERS

Please, Mr. Lazarnick...

Every aficionado of PBS TV science documentaries knows the frustration that comes from watching old re-runs and wondering what's happened in this field since the original broadcast; i.e. "Was it really an asteroid's impact that did in the dinosaurs?" etc.

Whenever we turn to George Lazarnick's *NETSUKE & INRO ARTISTS*, we feel a milder version of that same suspense, knowing that in the ensuing two years since publication some of those "unidentified *kakihan*" have been identified, "unreadable signatures" read, the author has had second and third thoughts that should have been included, and innumerable collectors have contributed additional information and questions that might be of wider interest.

Couldn't the Study Journal persuade Mr. Lazarnick to assemble a signature reading follow-up article from his correspondence files and private notes, and, at the same time, urge those collectors who have meant to write to George with their own questions, observations and alternative readings suggested by the book, but have not yet done so, to make their own contribution to such a review by doing so at this time?

Michael & Lucy Foster
Portland, Oregon

Monkey business anyone!

We have this little brass monkey that we are told is over 100 years old, and we have been unable to find out much about him. We would be delighted if you would publish a photograph of him in your Journal in case any readers might be able to help us. We are most anxious to learn more.

As for dimensions, he is a little hard to measure with his arms out, knees up, etc., but we have come up with the following: height - 4", width - 3", length at feet - 5 7/8", weight 2 1/2 lbs.

Please let us know anything that you might be able to find out. Thank you.

Doris Bauer
Wenatchee, Washington



Note: Readers should reply to Doris c/o Netsuke Kenkyukai, 2400 First National Tower, Tulsa, OK 74103

Kokusai, or, Kokusai?

A few months ago, an American collector wrote to me asking about the puzzling matter of *Kokusai's* choice of when to use his many different forms of signature. Although I have seen many *Kokusai* and investigated the subject, I didn't know the answer. First, there are not all that many of his carvings in this country, plus French collectors are very secretive. Seeing your Journal article about Frances

Numano, and remembering that our dear Richard Silverman is a great connoisseur of *Kokusai*, I write because I would like to put the matter to the American collectors who have a lot of *Kokusai* pieces to compare.

I suggest that some possibilities might be that the form of signature used depended on the year the piece was made, or that it would represent *Kokusai's* judgement of the quality of his own carving, or that he might use a different form for different subjects. But as you can see from the enclosed photos of two *kiserezutsu*, (see George Lazarnick's latest book and Paul Moss's N.K. Study Journal article Vol.2 No.1) two carvings of rain dragon have quite different signatures.

I do hope that other puzzling questions will be put in your columns so that we could improve our knowledge; dealers as well as collectors have always something to learn and it is a bit disappointing not to learn a bit more or to lose any opportunity to do so.

Alain Ducros
Paris, France



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A fine cluster of Tortoise and young in richly patinated wood. Signed *Masakazu. 19th C.*



A Chinese boy delights in capturing a turtle between two straw baskets. Finely carved in bamboo. 19th C.

The Art of



KŌDŌ OKUDA

by Robert O. Kinsey

On the opening day of the Netsuke Kenkyukai Convention in Washington D. C. (September 19-23, 1983) Mr. Robert O. Kinsey, collector *par excellence* of things Japanese, presented a colorful slide show of the works of art by the distinguished contemporary artist, Kōdō Okuda. Well over 100 items of this artist's varied *oeuvre* were dramatically exhibited in the Degas Room of L'Enfant Plaza Hotel for the duration of the Convention. These same items will be on display in Los Angeles, for the Olympics Festival, at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, from May 12 through June 17, 1984. The Los Angeles Chapter of Netsuke Kenkyukai will meet at the Center on the evening of May 11.

The following article about Kōdō and his accomplishments is adapted from Mr. Kinsey's lecture in Washington.

In my opinion, Kōdō is one of the most talented and versatile of Japan's contemporary artists. His preeminence as a painter, sculptor, and lacquer and metal artist is well established throughout the art world of Japan, but his formal introduction to the United States occurred only four years ago.

In 1979 Kōdō toured Los Angeles, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Mexico City, and San Francisco. In each of these cities his art was displayed to television audiences, and he held an exhibit in Minneapolis at the international convention of Netsuke Kenkyukai. In 1981 there was a comprehensive exhibit of his work at the Fine Arts Museum in Anchorage, Alaska. In addition to his two visits to North America, Kōdō has traveled extensively throughout Japan, also India, China, and Korea where he has studied the roots of Japanese art.

Kōdō is now forty-three years of age and resides in the rural village of Iwama, Ibaragi Prefecture, about 100 kilometers northeast of Tokyo. His lovely wife, Yukie, presides with infinite grace over their traditional Japanese household. They



Fig. 1 Kodo and his family performing tea ceremony.



Fig. 3 Moon gosu (incense box).



Fig.2 Kappa Drummer from KappaMusic Festival netsuke set.

have two sons: eighteen year old *Chikatoshi* and *Genjiro*, who is fifteen years old. The boys have an amiable dog whose name, curiously enough, is Marilyn Monroe but I wouldn't guarantee that, when they call her, all of their r's and l's are in the right place. Incidentally, Mrs. Kinsey and I have two dogs, but their names are Suki-san and Yodo-chan.

In addition to formal schooling, *Kōdō's* art training has been influenced by a number of illustrious teachers, beginning with his father who was a professional ivory carver. The late *Tatsuaki Kuroda*, who was designated by the Government of Japan as a "Living National Treasure," was *Kōdō's* friend and lacquer teacher. *Nobufusa Kawashima* is another friend of *Kōdō* who has also been de-

signed a "Living National Treasure." His art is that of weaving.

Kōdō uses several art names: *Kozan*, *Kōdō*, *Masato*, and *Umaroku*; but he is generally known as *Kōdō*, the art name of his father to which he succeeded at his father's death. His paintings are signed *Masato*, his *okimono* are signed *Kōdō*, and his netsuke and *ojime* are signed *Umaroku*.

For the most part, *Kōdō's* designs both in painting and sculpture are derived from nature, often the blossoms, leaves, berries, frogs, and spiderwebs observed in his own garden. His home is not far from the Sea of Kashima, which is part of the Pacific Ocean, and his art has been greatly influenced by marine life, the motion of waves, and the reflection of sunlight and moonlight on the water.

The hallmarks of his art--at once traditional and avant-garde--are originality, unique treatment of color and materials, superb workmanship, and subtle beauty. He speaks to the West in a truly Japanese idiom, with direct and forceful expression through elaborate techniques. His talent achieves the seemingly irreconcilable: the preservation of tradition within innovation. Japan's heritage of art conveys understated beauty, serenity, simplicity, and naturalness--and all of these qualities are reflected in Kōdō's work.

Some of his admirers consider Kōdō to be the modern-day equivalent of *Shibata Zeshin*, the great Japanese master of painting and lacquer work whose unique talents were a landmark during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Mr. Michael Birch, a distinguished and versatile British artist, has provided the following insight into Kōdō's talent:

"Kōdō-san is primarily a painter, and his unique carvings are, in a sense, his canvas. With a carefully controlled palette of lacquer colours, of dyes, gold-leaf, platinum, and mother-of-pearl inlays skillfully applied in a variety of techniques, together with meticulous carving, a true appreciation of form, and a microscopic knowledge of the anatomy of his subject, he sometimes creates a startling momentary illusion of realism. But he

consciously stops short of *trompe l'oeil*, and it is this minutely subtle element of subjective stylization which reveals his mastery of the medium.

"His carved ivory hermit crab will not scurry away; his ivory flowers will not perish and drop their petals; his autumn leaf--an exquisite masterpiece--could not crumble into oblivion, because Kōdō does not attempt to deceive the eye. He intrigues the intellect, delights the heart, and often enlightens the spirit."

Outstanding among Kōdō's accomplishments is his "Series of Fallen Leaves," a major undertaking which required two full years to complete. Both individually and as a group, the beauty of these leaves is breath-taking. As sculpture they are completely unique, original both in concept and in design. Masterful carving techniques are reflected in their fragile structure, and lacquer treatment has been added to enhance the hidden beauty of the ivory. It is important when viewing the fallen leaves to recognize that Kōdō's concept has subtle and profound significance, reaching far beyond the art of sculpture to the spiritual serenity of nature and its endless rhythms. In nature nothing is permanent except change. There is beauty in the death of a fallen leaf, but death is not the end, it is the beginning of new life. That new life will be

Fig. 4 White lotus netsuke.

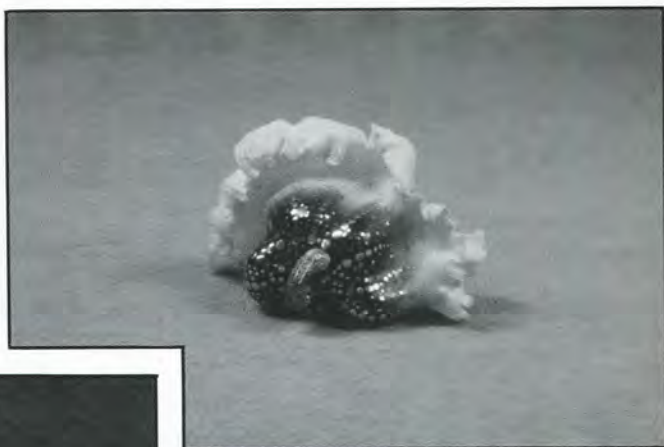


Fig. 5 Sea poem netsuke.

ephemeral and its beauty will be fragile, and it will bring peace of mind to the viewer.

The language barrier is a formidable obstacle to the Westerner's understanding of a Japanese artist. But let me quote two brief statements Kōdō himself has made which have been carefully translated. I think his own words will provide valuable insight:

"As the only child in the family, I inherited my father's conservative philosophy and piety as a matter of course. Although I do not consider myself especially religious, my faith gives me spiritual support in my day-to-day life. I wish to pass my faith on to my children. My creative life is naturally influenced by Buddhist philosophy. Whenever I appreciate classical works of art, I find myself drawn to the subtle expression of Buddhism. It only follows naturally that one out of two books I read is about religion and faith.

"When I was twenty-five, I encountered a great scholar of the wang-yang-Ming philosophy, Professor *Masaatsu Yasuoka*, who awakened my interest in oriental philosophy. This encounter resulted in discovery of my new self.

"Nature is rich in subjects that inspire designs. Rocks and trees excite my imagination. Even water and air can be momentarily grasped in my mental sketches. Gazing at the object inspires designs which will require meticulous sketching.

"The purpose of preliminary planning and sketching is to complete the entire design. Hence

issaku (a work of art made completely by one artist) is naturally the proper *modus operandi*. Even if a particular subject matter may have been used before, it could still result in a new design if, instead of a mere repetition, something new or beautiful is discovered in it. That is why carving can remain a creative profession. I detest mere repetitions of a previous design; I do not believe that anything good will come out of such repetitions.

"A carver must choose materials that are compatible with the design. Materials of high quality do not always guarantee good end-results; sometimes crude and cheap materials are used for superb carvings. Likewise, many designs call for color but the carving sometimes may look better uncolored. I am fond of ivory, being still captivated by its beauty as I was the first time I saw it as a child.

"I generate about thirty designs in a year. Much as I wish to translate all of these designs into carvings, I have not succeeded in doing so.

"I complete a carving in about ten days. Once I start carving I never abandon the work halfway. Nor do I leave the work even temporarily when I am not feeling well or when I fall out of enchantment with the idea. Since the purpose of carving is to perfect the design, a carver should not work on a number of different designs at the same time.

"No matter how often the subject may have been repeated over the years, each netsuke



Fig. 6 *Minogame* netsuke, emerging from sea with pearl in its mouth.

Fig. 7 Hermit crab netsuke.



Fig. 8 Plum blossom netsuke.

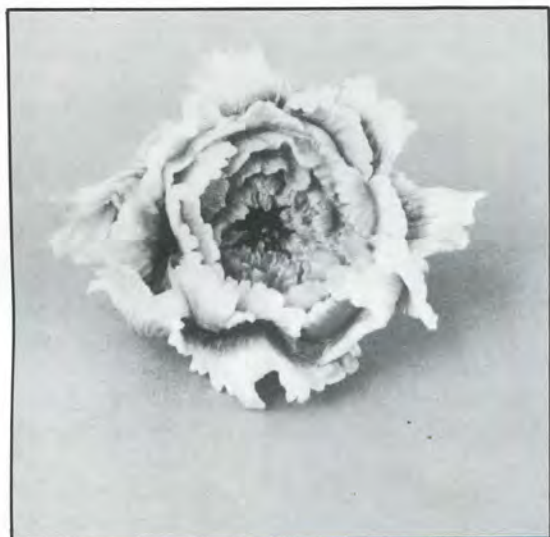


Fig. 9 Chrysanthemum netsuke.



Fig.10 Spider of lacquered ivory with double spider web on bamboo driftwood.



Fig.11 Snail of lacquered ivory on lacquered driftwood.



Fig.12 Genji scroll netsuke -front view.

made in the olden days still transmits the feelings of the era in which it was carved. My designs are almost always abstract. Although the subject may have concrete form and substance, my observation is sublimated to imagination. In this manner I wish to discover a design that best suits the modern era. The newer and freer the design, the better it is, as far as design *per se* is concerned. But it should not be forgotten that netsuke owe their uniqueness and distinction from other forms of art to the restraint inherent therein. This traditionally imposed restraint is very important. It is the *sine qua non* for netsuke."

When I was in Japan last year, Mrs. Okuda gave me a book which she said conveyed *Kōdō's* soul and spirit. It was "The Book of Tea," published

by *Kakuzo Okakura* in 1906.

For many years Professor *Okakura* was the curator of Oriental Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and his book, curiously, was first written in English and then translated into Japanese and many other languages. The book is, as indicated on its jacket, a "magnificent attempt to make understandable, through the tea ceremony, the essence of Japanese culture, to reveal to the West a unified concept of art and nature, nature and art blended into a harmony of daily living. The tea ceremony is a vital part of the daily living of the *Okuda* family.

Fig. 1. shows the *Okuda* family in the *tatami* room of their home with *Chikatoshi*, the older son, performing the tea ceremony. His father and

mother and younger brother, Genjiro, are seated in front of the *tokonoma* alcove.

Fig. 2. is one of the Series of Fallen Leaves (ten in all). *Kōdō* describes these leaves as *ochiba* and *kareha*. *Ochiba* means falling leaf, and *kareha* means dead leaf. Viewing these leaves brings to mind the lines from Keats that "Beauty is truth, truth beauty. That is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Kōdō's Moon Gosu (incense box) is shown in Fig. 3. During the Heian Period of Japan (794-1185) the *gosu* was a box used at the temple for storing incense. Today the *gosu* is used as an object of beauty to be displayed in the *tokonoma* alcove and admired during the tea ceremony. *Kōdō's* boxes, sculpted from ivory and lacquered and inlaid, typify the Japanese tradition that nothing is useful unless it is beautiful and, conversely, that nothing is beautiful unless it is useful. On the exterior of the Moon Gosu *Kōdō* has portrayed the moon and its halo using gold and silver inlay (*zogan*) with lacquer (*urushi*) embellishment. On the interior he has portrayed moonbeams, using gold and silver leaf (*kirikane*) on a ground of lacquer.

Of particular interest to netsuke collectors are *Kōdō's* netsuke and *ojime*. *Kōdō*, like many other modern artists, recognizes that viewing angle and lighting are the two key elements in sculpture appreciation. Because of its small size, a netsuke can readily be

held in the hand and turned for optimum viewing angle, and it can be moved to proper lighting. These were among the considerations which persuaded *Kōdō* to select netsuke as a medium for his talents as a sculptor.

Perhaps no country in the world is more sensitive to appreciation of seasonal change than Japan. As far as I know, *Kōdō* is the first *netsuke-shi* in history to carve the four seasons as the subjects for a suite of netsuke. For the form of these netsuke he rejected the *manju* shape, feeling that a perfect circle was untrue to nature, and selected instead the flat, smooth, but irregular shapes of waterworn stones.

Kōdō likes to carve sets of netsuke, and one such set is especially noteworthy. On January 1, 1980, shortly after his first visit to North America, *Kōdō* insists that he dreamed that he was in Buddhist Hell. (The Japanese believe that the first

dream of the New Year is extremely important.) He has portrayed that dream in a set of five netsuke. One netsuke is carved as Emma Dai-O, the Buddhist King of Hell, but the calligraphy on his hat reads "Kinsey" instead of Emma Dai-O (Fig. 14). Like Kinsey he is left-handed and, like Kinsey, he enjoys drinking sake. He waits eagerly for the creation of another masterpiece of Japanese art by a pair of devils (*oni*), one of whom, *Kōdō*, is trying to paint Mt. Fuji while his assistant, Yukie Okuda, endeavors to hold the painting scroll. One of Emma Dai-O's *oni* retainers sings and plays the *shamisen* while another idly watches the artist and is prepared to refill Emma Dai-O's sake cup with some cheap sake from "Umaroku's Sake Shop." (*Umaroku* is *Kōdō's* art name for signing netsuke and *ojime*.) A third retainer, a stupid *oni* holding the wrong kind of brush, eagerly watches the artist, hoping to learn how to paint.

From walking the beach and gazing at the sea,

Kōdō found inspiration for his netsuke designs of three wave sea poems (waves breaking on a stormy sea, the full moon reflected on a placid sea, and ripply waves coming into shore). He has also carved several abstract sea-poem netsuke (Fig. 5) and *ojime*, and some of these designs are mildly *shunga*. His sea creatures include a *sashi*-style netsuke of a dried fish, a realistic hermit crab (Fig. 7), and a *minogame* tortoise emerging from the sea with a pearl in its mouth which repre-



Fig.13 Strawberry netsuke.

sents the *tama* or symbol of good fortune and long life (Fig. 6).

From subjects found in his own garden, *Kōdō* has carved netsuke of a hibernating frog (see cover), a spiderweb of lacquered ivory and bamboo driftwood (Fig. 8), several lotus blossoms (Fig. 4), a chrysanthemum (Fig. 9), a double plum blossom, a strawberry (Fig. 13), a curled lotus leaf, a cluster of cherry blossoms, and a snail (ivory) on a lacquered piece of driftwood (Fig. 11).

Kōdō likes to use *kappa* as the subject of his netsuke and *ojime*. A *kappa* is a legendary river imp with the body of a turtle, the legs of a frog, and the head of a monkey. These creatures are found in two areas of Japan: on the island of Kyushu and in Ibaragi prefecture near *Kōdō's* home. The Kyushu *kappa* are sometimes vicious little creatures, but the Ibaragi *kappa* are as amiable as the Muppets, and, moreover, are well versed in the

Rare manju-like netsuke showing both sides of life: one side, carved of rose wood in the shape of a bat and *reishi* fungus representing long life and happiness; the other side, a bone skull representing death.

Macabre subjects, such as skulls and skeletons, were often worn by the Japanese who were involved in entertainment to remind them of the shortness of life and the need to enjoy it as fully as possible.



Denis Szeszler
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Fig.14 King Emma Dai-o and retainers in Buddhist Hell set of netsuke.

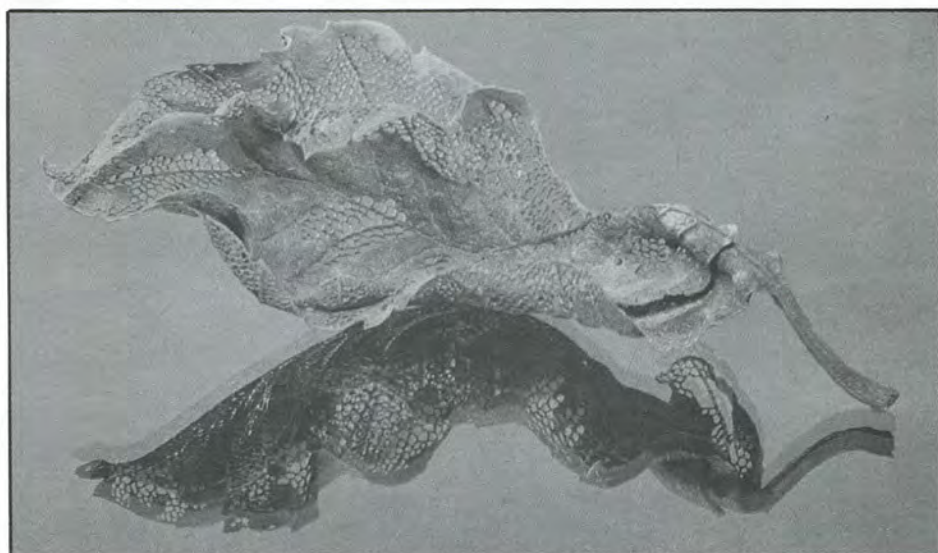


Fig. 15 A "fallen leaf".

performing arts (music and dance, both classical and modern) and in Zen Buddhist philosophy and meditation.

Kōdō relied partly on traditional Japanese paintings and legends, but mostly on his own imagination and sense of humor, for his numerous designs of *kappa* netsuke and *ojime*. For his six-piece set of "Kappa Music Festival" netsuke he

designed a *kappa* drummer playing a pumpkin drum with cucumber drumsticks (one of which is caught in his headband), a *kappa* flutist playing a cucumber flute, a *kappa* bass violinist playing a lotus leaf strung with ivy, a *kappa* cymbalist striking two lotus leaf cymbals, a pair of *kappa* classical ballet dancers, and a pair of *kappa* modern "swing" dancers (Fig.16).

NOTICE OF IMPORTANT DATE CHANGE

During the excellent convention held in Washington, D.C., the London Netsuke Committee announced the next London Convention to take place during September 22-29, 1984. Because this proved to be a very difficult time for many of our collecting friends, we have altered the dates of the convention which will now be held on October 20-27, 1984. We apologise for the misinformation, and look forward to welcoming as many collectors and dealers as possible on October 20, 1984.

Neil Davey



Fig.16 Kappa modern 'swing' Dancers.

A consideration of Kōdō's talents must include reference to his calligraphy skills. His wife Yukie has learned to speak and write English and to type, and he has acquired a substantial understanding of English. Usually, however, he writes in Japanese calligraphy and his beautiful letters are a reminder that calligraphy is considered a major art in Japan. Kōdō's and Yukie's letters are written or typed on handmade paper (*washi*) which Kōdō has decorated with ink and lacquer using a process known as *sumi nagashi* which creates subtle, abstract designs of cloud shapes and wave patterns.



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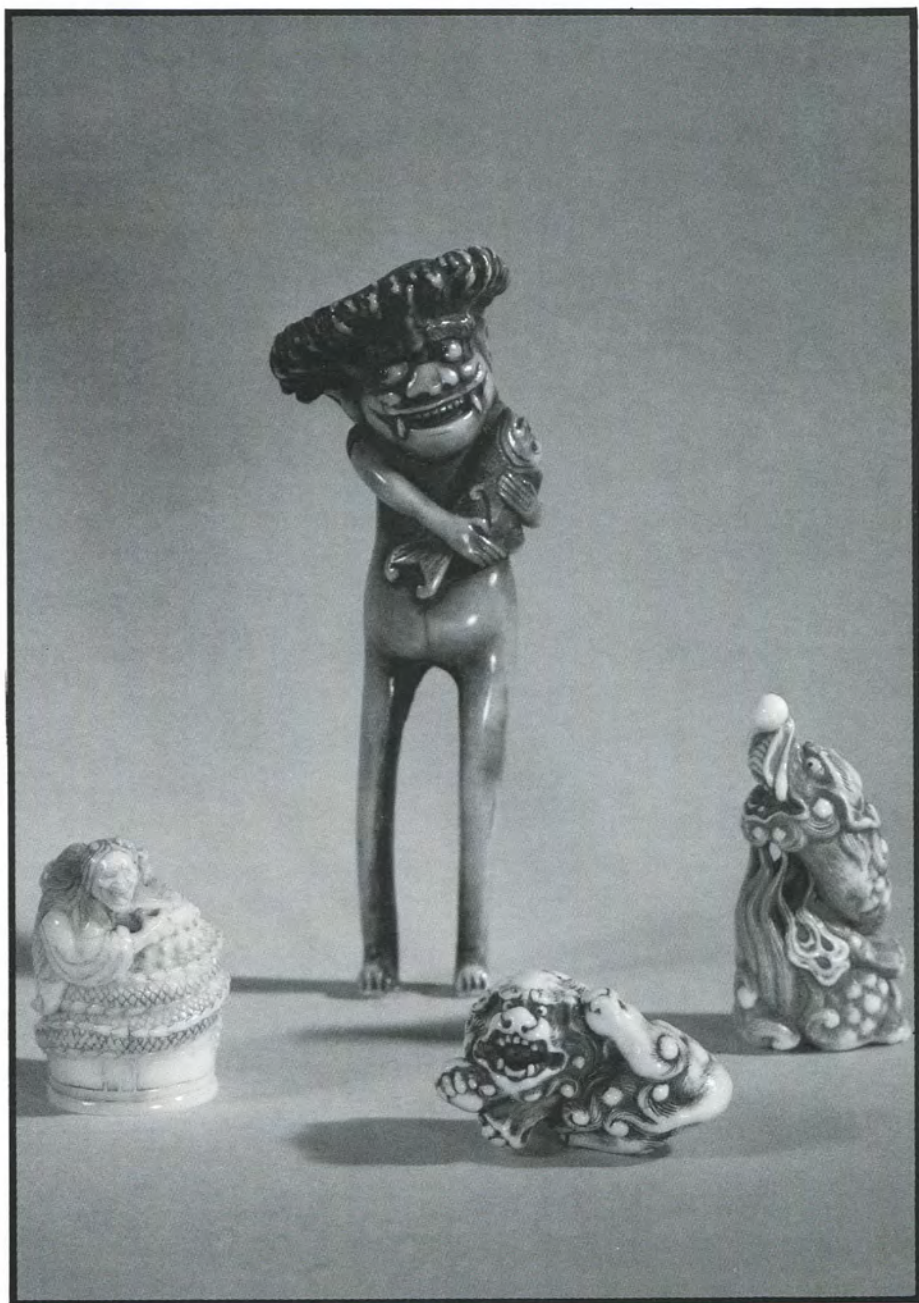
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AN OVER-ALL VIEW OF JAPANESE CERAMICS AND HOW THEY RELATE TO NETSUKE

By Richard R. Silverman



Oni Nembutsu (Shigaraki-Yaki). An excellent example of this very old traditional stoneware showing the unglazed parts in contrast with a fine blue-turquoise glaze for the oni's coat. Mid 19th C.



Shi-Shi on Large Lotus (Hirado-Yaki). Superb quality porcelain of pure white with brown and gray glazes. Mid 19th C.

Pottery has been produced in Japan since the dawn of history, with written history beginning around 27 B.C.. By 552 A.D. there were many Chinese and Korean art objects in Japan, and included in these objects must have been some glazed pottery. Records show that by 806 A.D. glazed roof tiles were being made; but porcelain was not introduced until the 16th C. when Korean potters were brought to Japan.

Japanese ceramic art has felt the influence of four great waves of culture from outside the narrow borders of its country.

1. Tang (618-907) and Sung (960-1126)

From China came the beautiful old celadons (*Seiji*) and three-colored pottery (*Sansai*). In their attempt to reproduce Chinese celadon wares the

Japanese happened upon Yellow Seto in the 16th C. *Seto* is probably the oldest pottery center in Japan, dating back to 815 A.D. although porcelain didn't come into being there until about 1807.

2. Korea

In the 16th C. came a crude form of porcelain white wares (*Hakuji*) and underglazed blue wares (*Sometsuke*). Koreans built kilns in northern and southern Kyushu. It was Ri Sampei who discovered deposits of white china clay in the hills near Arita and is credited with making the first porcelains in Japan.

3. Chinese Art of Overglaze

About the middle of the 17th C. the Chinese art of overglaze decoration on pottery came to Japan.

This was the art of the Ming (1368-1643) and early Ching (1644-1910) periods. From small beginnings in Kyushu it had spread all over Japan by the 18th C.

4. Export Ware

This influence was undoubtedly cultural but of doubtful artistic value. The demand for wares pleasing to people of other countries was felt early in the 17th C., spearheaded by the Dutch traders on Deshima Island in Nagasaki Harbor.

Japan has contributed to the ceramic art of the world through her love of simplicity and naturalness. The Japanese acknowledge their great debt to older cultures but I think they have something to offer in return. Of all of the art forms of Japan, pottery is one of the two best examples demonstrating the Japanese sense of individuality; the other is netsuke. Japanese porcelains do not show this feeling as well as pottery does. Porcelains are more apt to follow stereotyped shapes and patterns, but in making pottery wares a Japanese allows his individual fancy full sway.

Pottery and the art of glazing made steady progress in Japan, especially during the Momoyama (1568-1603) period. This time can be called the renaissance in Japan when the tea ceremony cult was at its height of influence. During the next 50 years the manufacture of porcelain was begun.

Designs that are purely Japanese in origin and development include the ship of good fortune and the treasures it carries; the flaming pearl; three comma-shapes in a circle (the Korean has two commas and no space in between); popular food dishes - vegetables and fish; designs based on snake skins, fish scales, and tortoises; crests; historical figures of warriors in armor, and Bugaku and Gigaku figures.

The Japanese have copied all Chinese designs but the converse is not so. One of the most striking design differences between Chinese and Japanese ceramics can be found in the use of borders and repeated panel designs. The Chinese delight in covering the surface glaze of any article with a mass of intricate designs --they almost seem to have a fear of undecorated surfaces (though this does not pertain to polychromes).

There is a vast difference between the art designs used by Chinese potters and those used by Chinese painters. This is not so in Japan where the potters treated the article to be decorated the same way the pictorial artist treated his canvas --merely as a surface on which to paint. Chinese painters reached their greatest heights in handling empty spaces in a picture, but it was left to the Japanese potters to apply this technique to ceramics.

Until about the 18th C., kilns were established at sites where large deposits of clay were available. Thus the early ceramics can be identified by the type of clay peculiar to the area, whether Seto,

Oribe, Bizen, Kutani, or Hirado. But these criteria lost their reliability during the 18th C. when bulk clays from various deposits were shipped to kilns throughout the country and when cobalt dyes were exported from China to Japan. The sheer number of kilns operating throughout the islands of Japan is staggering and complicates problems of provenance. Various listings of the main kilns contain from 50 to 100 entries. However, there are hundreds and hundreds of minor, private, and individual kilns throughout the country. It is the practice of many kilns, in addition to making their own wares, to produce reasonable facsimiles of wares that are characteristic of other kilns and areas. For example, *Banko* in Mie Prefecture produces wares typical of *Raku* pottery and Chinese-style enamel porcelain. The kilns of the Kyoto area are astounding not only for their numbers but also for their variety of techniques, craftsmanship, and types which copy the style of ceramics produced in almost any area of the country. Some Kyoto wares in the style of distant areas are designated by special names, for example, *Kyo-Satsuma*. Many individual potters worked in various styles and many of them traveled extensively visiting numerous kilns where they worked and produced.

Japan had many gifted potters who are known by name (something that did not happen in China). Your chances of seeing authentic pieces by these masters are very slim. As with all Oriental art, their names were put on pieces by students and admirers, not to deceive but to show respect. Also, in most cases, these gifted potters, listed below, passed on their names to their heirs, and there can be many generations spanning hundreds of years using the same name:

Eiraku	-1558 (was potting in 1540)
Hon ami	1557-1637
Enshu	1579-1647 tea teacher. The <i>Shidoro Kiln</i> was one of the seven kilns of Enshu.
Ninsei	1595-1666
Kenzan	1661-1742
Dohachi	1737-1804
Rokubei	1740-1799
Mokubei	-1834
Makuzu	1797-
Kenya	1821-1889

There are certain colors and ways of using color on Chinese porcelains which are not found on Japanese wares. With the exception of celadon (*Seiji*), one-color porcelains are practically unknown in Japan, except for Chinese imitations and a small production of white (*Hakuji*) wares. The Japanese prefer a white or neutral color background for their designs. Underglaze blue and red are common to both countries as are the so-called

"five-color glazes." *Imari* red and *Kutani* purple, green, and yellow are unmistakably Japanese.

But more certain than the design or color as a clue to the origin of the porcelains is the quality of the porcelain, its glaze, and its purpose.

To the feel there is a very perceptible difference between Japanese and Chinese porcelain. Chinese porcelain wares are light and thin and the glaze is hard and smooth; the edges of a bowl and plate are thin, almost sharp. In contrast, Japanese wares are thicker and heavier, the glaze is somewhat different from the Chinese glaze, almost soft, and the edges are thick and rounded. Old Chinese porcelain shows signs of wear on the edges where the enamel chips off giving the edge a moth-eaten appearance; the Japanese wares' glaze on the edges breaks off. The glaze on the edges of Chinese wares seem thinner than on the body while the edges on the Japanese wares seem to be more incorporated into the paste and a part of the body.

There are also differences on the footrims of the two: the Chinese footrims are often beveled rather than square-cut, and they show signs of the sand or gravel on which they were placed in the kiln for firing. Japanese porcelain has a square-cut rim fully covered with a glaze as clean and perfect as the bowl edge itself. The glaze on Chinese wares frequently stops short of the bottom of the object.

The Japanese system of classifying their ceramics may be designated by the name of the kiln at which it was made, by the name of the first potter to have used that style of decoration, or by a name indicating the method by which the object was potted. Japanese ceramic connoisseurs are apt to name a piece of pottery by the style or type of decoration, and usually disregard the actual maker of the object or the kiln in which it was made.

THE PRIMARY EARLY POTTERY AND STONEWARE KILNS

Oribe: 1544-1615. *Oribe* wares use dark green glazes on a portion; the rest have a thick gray glaze on black and green or a reddish-brown glaze on red. The green glaze is unique to *Oribe*. The edges of the glaze thin into peacock-blue and purple-red. The general appearance of the wares is refined elegance. They have distinctive shapes; there are no regular round dishes or cups, but instead dented or bent shapes, squares, and rectangles. The designs are extremely simple.

Raku: -1592. This general type of pottery is preferred by *cha-jin* (tea masters). The glaze is always thick and soft, both to the touch and to the sight. Rarely is any design painted on the glaze.

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The colors run from black to all shades of brown, to gray, red, soft yellow, or yellow-whites, copied from the Korean celadons.

Bizen: *Ko-Bizen* goes back to the 13th C.. ("Ko" means old, and the Japanese have a specific time designation of "ko" for each kind of pottery.) Modern *Bizen*, as we know it, dates from the late 1700's. It is used primarily for tea ceremony utensils, and figurines are also made from this clay. The pottery is never glazed and the natural clays fire to grays and browns. The unusual markings on the pieces come from wrapping the articles in straw which has been soaked in sea water, leaving red marks, or imbedding them in pine needles which in the kiln produce the outline or shadow of individual needles, thus giving the surface a pattern.

Karatsu: *Ko-Karatsu* dates back to 1324-1469. As with *Bizen*, these wares are not of much interest to non-Japanese. Their color scale is low, ranging from grayish-white through golden-brown to brownish-black. The decorative designs are either exceedingly sketchy, developed in blue-greens and browns (*E-Karatsu*) or with fulsome detail incised and inlaid with much repetition. These wares show some Chinese influence, but they are basically Korean in form and feeling.

Satsuma: Dates from 1601. Old *Satsuma* was not a refined ware. Traditional *Satsuma* as known to the Japanese is of no concern to us.

The wares which we know as *Satsuma* are a light porous semi-porcelaneous pottery of soft crackled golden-cream color decorated in enamel colors and gold. The wares are mostly in floral designs or designs of large groups of people. This pottery is the most easily recognized ware in America and seems to be the most popular, thus commanding the highest prices. It certainly is not so valued by the Japanese, who scorn all but the very finest pieces as export ware. The price is based on the fineness of the detail; the more people and the more flowers, the higher the price.

Hagi: A thick but finely grained pottery with a thin yellowish-white or bluish-pink glaze with large fine crackles. The most beautiful examples of this type are the pink cloud-like formations on a gray glaze. A distinctive feature is the spatula cut and gouge, like an upside down "v", which gives irregularity to wheel-thrown bowls and vases. This

pottery has become very popular in the 20th C. and most of it sells for much less than the other pottery mentioned.

Banko stoneware: The Japanese use the word stoneware somewhat differently than we do. To the Japanese, stoneware means a heavy unglazed pottery, literally as hard as stone, and things made of it are chiefly large containers or pots. Today *Banko* wares include small tea pots, covered tea cups, and small bowls. Although most pieces are an unglazed brown, there might be some decoration and glaze, albeit subdued, on the inside.

Shigaraki: No change has taken place in its method of potting since the early 8th C.. The clay is heavy and coarse and thickly mixed with fine quartz particles, and it cannot be thrown on the potter's wheel. It develops a dark blue glaze shading to brown with spots of yellow and red, and is always in great demand for tea ceremony utensils

including flower vases and water jars (*mizu-sashi*).

Seto: This is perhaps the oldest pottery center in Japan dating back to 815 A.D.. However, porcelain did not come into existence there until about 1807. Most *Seto* wares should properly be described as faience, and not as porcelain. In general, *Seto* productions tend to be large and include flower pots for dwarf trees and garden ornaments such as *karashi* and lanterns. By the mid-19th C. many



Kogo (incense box) (*Satsuma-Yaki*). A beautiful crackled glaze of a *shi-shi* among the clouds, with raised enamels of blue and green, and red and white, with gold accents. Ca 1920.

famous potters had settled at the various *Seto* kilns, including *Sosendo* and *Kato Shuntai*, and a high-grade porcelain was being produced. *Seto* porcelain glazes are more glossy than those of *Imari* and the paste is coarser. The decorations are mostly underglaze blue. The best period for porcelain was between 1830-1860. The use of oxidized cobalt was inaugurated in 1877, eight years later than at *Arita*. Today Nagoya, the home of the *Seto* kilns, is the largest producer of inexpensive commercial porcelain. These pieces are hard to identify except for their very small cost.

THE MAIN PORCELAIN KILNS

Imari: *Imari* was, and still is, the port city through which the products of the kilns of *Arita*, *Nabeshima*, and *Kakiemon* were shipped. *Imari* is a generic term, and besides including the three wares just mentioned, *Imari* is used generically to include

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Recumbent Boar (Raku-Yaki). With seal "EIRAKU" (similar to the seal of Raku IX 1756-1811) but more likely that of Raku XII (1824-1897). A superb quality netsuke with an over-all rich Raku red glaze.

Hirado and Oniwayaki, the garden kilns of Okochi and Mikawaguchi. Originally, all early Nabeshima and Hirado wares were produced privately for the lords of the province and were not for public sale. All of these kilns are situated within 10 to 15 miles of each other, except Hirado which is on a nearby island. Imari can be divided into five categories:

1. Sometsuke (blue and white).
2. Kakiemon ca. 1646.
3. Kinrande - gold on red enamel background (Kutani also uses this glaze).

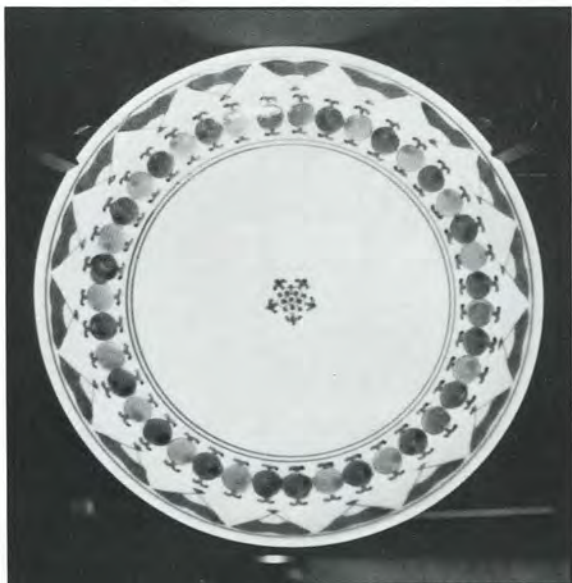
4. Sansai -- three-color overglaze red and green enamel on white, or underglaze blue or dullish purple with overglaze red on white.
5. Gosai -- five-color or Nishikide (brocade) from late Ming and early Ching designs.

Imari has no potters' seals or marks by which it can be easily identified. The oldest Imari bear the seals of the Chinese models they copied, the seal being part of the design. The oldest mark used is that of FUKU. Only after the beginning of Meiji, did potters begin to sign. The only great names of Imari are Kakiemon, Fukugawa, Tokuemon, and Imaemon. There are Imari kilns in at least 21 different towns in the area. In 1869 these kilns began using oxidized cobalt aniline dyes. The only pieces of great worth are those signed by the families listed before. Most of the other wares run the gamut of prices.

Nabeshima: As we know them today, Nabeshima wares probably date from 1661. The official kiln used for the last Lord Nabeshima closed in 1871. The best period is thought to be between 1716-1775. It is generally easy to distinguish earlier Nabeshima pieces from the 19th-C. pieces: the quality of the body and the glazes in these pieces reached perfection, while later pieces are clumsy and thick, often with defects in the glaze, and the comb pattern around the base is irregular. This comb pattern on the trim and the medallions formed by

groups of Chinese coin designs on the outside or back of the bowls are a distinguishing mark for *Nabeshima*. The *Nabeshima* kilns made celadons, blue and white wares, and colored enamels over the glaze decoration. *Nabeshima* designs are quite distinctive: two or three blossoms, a low fence zigzagging, and bold and simple geometric patterns. The colors are confined to underglaze cobalt blue, a beautiful bright, yet soft and appealing, iron red, a soft vivid green, a thin pale translucent yellow, and a thin lilac purple. A very few pieces have a turquoise blue enamel. *Nabeshima* wares are easily distinguished from ordinary *Imari* porcelains because of their fineness

Kakiemon: This came into being in the early 1600's. The first *Kakiemon* was the first potter to disregard the Chinese style of crowded patterns covering the entire surface. He seldom covered more than a third to a half of the surface. His designs were sketchy and light. He used pure rich enamel colors: a pleasing red-orange (the color of a persimmon, 'kaki' in Japanese, hence the name), a bright clear blue-green (almost turquoise), a clear opaque yellow, an overglaze violet blue, a purple which shades almost into brown at times, also a black overglaze enamel, and a good underglaze which was used sparingly. Occasionally highlights were added with gold. The style was naturalistic, not conventional, and the favorite



Kakiemon Plate (Hachi-Sun-Zara). A fine quality plate with a rim design of fans and lanterns in a non-traditional blue-and-white glaze.

Inuhariko Hime Bako (a hidden sex-box in the shape of a good luck dog) (*Hirado-Yaki*). An extremely rare and fine blue-and-white piece with an over-all design of a good luck symbol. Probably given to the bride for her wedding night and use thereafter. Mid 19th C.





Parrot on Branch (*Kutani-Yaki*). Fine quality porcelain with traditional *Kutani* glazes of green, purple, and yellow. Ex: Brockhaus. Mid 19th C.



Tongue-Cut Sparrow (*Banko-Yaki*). An unusual example from this kiln with red, yellow, green, and black glazes over a pure white body. Were it not for an attested *tomobako*, one could not easily identify the kiln. Late 19th C.

designs were flowers, birds, and butterflies. Borders and repeat designs were seldom used and there were never any geometric designs. *Kakiemon* colors differ from *Nabeshima*. They are jewel-like, are raised above the glaze, and are easily perceptible to the touch. *Nabeshima* is more like water colors that are part of the glaze with an underglazed cobalt blue which is perfection.

Hirado: *Hirado* started about 1750. The only wares that approach *Nabeshima* are *Hirado* but they were never made in typical *Nabeshima* shapes. Between 1750 and 1830 the *Hirado* kilns turned out some of the finest porcelains ever made in Japan, but they were not for public sale until Meiji. Prior to 1868 the wares consisted of small cups, wine bottles, and small figures of men, animals, and flowers. The biscuit is a fine hard porcelain with the property of producing a beautiful clear blue in underglaze decoration. It is not a showy ware - the blue is too soft and the outlines tend to blur. *Ko-Hirado* is very rare. After 1868 *Hirado* produced many small ornamental pieces decorated with designs pierced, carved, or moulded in high relief in all white, blue and white, or in a peculiar slate-purple-blue enamel glaze.

Kutani: *Kutani* wares started in 1628. They were not discovered by Europeans until after the *Arita* kilns and so there was less outside influence, thereby making *Kutani* pottery more highly regarded by the Japanese and bringing higher prices for the finest pieces. *Kutani* can be roughly divided in two classes: those that are indisputably *Kutani* in color and style of design, and those which resemble *Imari* to such a degree that considerable study is

necessary to distinguish them if they are not marked with "*Kutani*." With the exception of the very oldest pieces, most are marked with the character FUKU (happiness) in a square drawn in black with a brush washed over with a yellow or green glaze, or "*Kutani*" (nine valleys), and, later, the artist's name. This is probably due to the fact that these kilns were established as a commercial venture and were not private kilns of feudal lords. Up until 1664 only plates were made. A characteristic of *Kutani* wares was the attention given to the back of the plates: either a colored enamel was used or the surface pattern was continued over the edge. They have no exact Chinese prototype; they are as Japanese as Mount Fuji. Designs run from flowers and abstract designs to landscapes with figures. The colors vary as much as the quality, ranging from Persian blue-green, eggplant purple, reds, pinks, yellows, cobalt blue, white, black, brown, violet-blue, and underglaze blue to gold and silver enamel or paint. The clays range from a coarse granular paste-like pottery to faience, and a thick heavy porcelain to a fine almost transparent porcelain. Perhaps only the production of the first forty years were originals; then everyone copied what had come before. *Kutani* wares include widely different types of design, much more so than *Imari* which were fairly uniform in character. The best that can be done in trying to date most *Kutani* articles is to say that they could not have been made before a certain date.

Kyoto: Originated about 1500. The problem here is that over the years these kilns have copied everything from *Seiji* (celadon) to *Nishikie* bro-



Sleeping Cat (*Imari-Yaki*). An extremely fine porcelain netsuke of pure white with details and highlights in black, red, and gold. Probably mid 19th C.

cedes, and the great blue and whites of the other kilns. It is most difficult to distinguish the *Kyo-yaki* (*yaki* means pottery) from the copies of work from other kilns. The great *Ninsei*, who potted from 1630-1640, and *Kenzan* (1661-1742) both worked here making distinctive potteries, as well as *Dohachi* (1737-1804) who also did most of his work in Kyoto. From these men came the *Awata* and *Kiyomizu* kilns. *Ninsei* is first among equals and the vast majority of his works were for the tea ceremony. Pieces by the first general of these potters are rarely found outside of Japan, and many of them are considered national treasures. *Ninsei* shows very little Chinese influence in his work, whereas *Kenzan* shows far more. *Dohachi* seemed to follow both men. Most of their wares were of a soft clay with perfection being the clue word, whether they were copying a *Raku*-like piece or an ornate *Nishiki-e*. Today *Kyo-yaki* kilns run the gamut from very fine to quite commercial ware, and attribution can be very difficult. *Kiyomizu* developed *Sometsuke* in the 1700's, and *Rokubei*, *Seifu*, and *Yokei* are among the best-known artists of this work. *Inuyami-yaki* produced *Sometsuke* by 1751

FOLK POTTERY "MINGEI-YAKI" or "GETAMONO."

The tradition of unsigned utilitarian pottery is long in Japan. It started out as the pottery of the poor. In the 1920's a group of great artisans started to produce superb pottery that is "earthy" in looks and feeling with all the traditional glazes of browns, grays, and blues. The painted pieces have a strong brushstroke and the designs are either geometric or non-figurative. Traditionally the pieces are not signed and can only be authenticated by the signed box (*tomobako*) of the potter. The value of these works is based on having the proper box. It is the only way to properly identify the maker, and if the box is missing the work loses over 50% of its value, even if the piece is unmistakably by a given potter.

The two giants of the *Mingei* movement are *Kawai Kanjiro* and *Hamada Shoji*; also, to a lesser extent, *Kitaoka Rosanjin*.

Karakusa: Chinese grass designs were very popular during the first half of the 19th C. *Karakusa* is always underglazed blue and is usually on strong thick porcelain. It is classed as "getamono" or "mingei."

CERAMIC NETSUKE

What has been said for Japanese ceramics in general may be said about ceramic netsuke. The vast majority of these netsuke were produced after the time when the bulk clay from prime sources was shipped to kilns throughout Japan. Therefore, the problem of assigning a netsuke to its mother kiln or to its parental area is at best a long shot. The expert applies standards of color, glaze, craftsmanship, and firing techniques in arriving at the provenance for a bowl, plate, censor, etc., but these standards can tell us almost nothing about the provenance of a netsuke because it is too small to identify by clay, glazes, or by color.

Many ceramic netsuke bear the baked seal of a particular kiln, and such brands or marks are fairly reliable. However, the situation is quite different in the case of netsuke bearing the individual seals or signatures of the great potters such as *Kenzan*, *Ninsei*, and *Dohachi*. These netsuke should be regarded with the greatest skepticism since there is no proof that these potters ever made netsuke.

Ceramic netsuke can be classified into categories, just as other ceramics:

1. Pottery: Produced from crude clay that is low fired. Pottery usually has a porous surface and rough texture, and is often referred to as earthenware. It is softer than both stoneware and porcelain. Pottery lends itself to bold rough shapes and designs. One of the best examples of pottery is *Raku*.

2. Stoneware: Fired at higher temperatures than pottery causing the particles of clay to melt and fuse with the body, forming a harder, smoother surface than pottery. A good example of stoneware is *Banko*.

3. Porcelain: Produced from clay fired at very high temperatures causing the clay to vitrify into an extremely hard, translucent surface with a glossy texture. Good examples of porcelain are *Hirado* and *Imari*.

The largest representation among netsuke is certainly *Hirado-yaki*. *Hirado* is a small island and shipping port established by the Dutch traders near Nagasaki. ■

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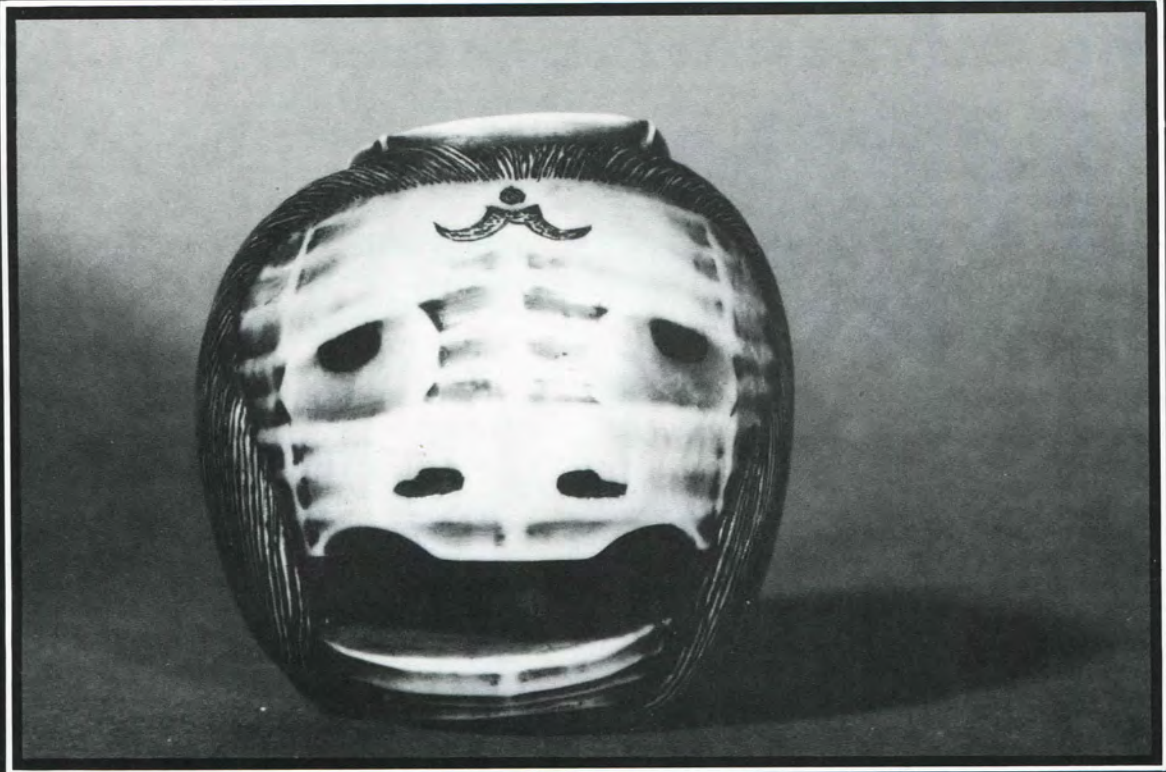
Raymond Bushell

The illustrations are two views of a Ghost Lantern inscribed *Masanao* which I have owned for many years. I liked the subject which was my reason for collecting it, though I never considered the style, treatment, coloring, or age as convincingly *Masanao*.

Since then I have been alerted to the identical subject and similar treatments of the Ghost Lantern in many collections. Mrs. Hull Grundy illustrated one signed *Okatomo* in her article on *Tomotada* and *Okatomo*, and alongside the figure reproduced a *Hokusai* print of the Ghost Lantern as the original model. Jack Hillier dates the *Hokusai* print as 1830—which leaves us to deal with the anachronism of an 18th C. carver copying a 19th C. design. Another *Okatomo* Ghost Lantern, ex George Lazarnick Collection, was sold at Butterfield and Butterfield, San Francisco, May 1983. Lazarnick owns one signed *Mitsuhiro* which is illustrated in his *Netsuke and Inro Artists*, page 92. Richard Silverman owns one that is also signed *Mitsuhiro*. In his Card Index Meinertzhagen drew and described three similar Ghost Lanterns, one signed *Tomotada*, one signed *Akitoshi*, and one signed *Seigyoku*. There may be others in existence as well, but these are the only ones I have studied in photographs.

It may be plausible to suppose that seven or eight carvers, though quite separated in time and area, hit upon the same ghost print for their design. But it is much less believable that diverse carvers with high degrees of stylistic individualities treated the design with so much uniformity and technical similarity. I submit as a possible explanation for the anomaly that most, if not all, of the Ghost Lanterns were carved by the same man who inscribed different, and in most cases famous, names as a commercial expedient.

I cannot emphasize too strongly that I am not stating a final conclusion — besides my own *Masanao* I have examined in-the-flesh only one of the Ghost Lanterns enumerated above — but offer a hypothetical explanation only for the regimental conformity of the treatments by diverse and distinguished carvers. ■



NETSUKE ON FIVE DOLLARS A DAY

or

How to Collect and Enjoy Netsuke on a Teacher's Salary



By Robert P. Goode
Department of Biology, City College of New York

Nearly five years ago, appropriately on Valentine's Day, I made the acquaintance of a beautiful little work of art - a lovely, graceful horse by Masanao of Kyoto. It was love at first sight. I knew from the first that I would never possess her unless:

a. My ship came in (highly unlikely, since I don't even own a rowboat); or

b. I stumbled upon her at a flea market or garage sale for a few dollars since "the piece must be damaged - it has two holes in it" (equally unlikely).

Fantasy aside, I was forced to set my sights somewhat lower—to collect netsuke that satisfied both my aesthetic tastes and my limited budget.



Fig. 1

This is not to say that I haven't examined, fondled, and enjoyed some of the finest netsuke: a powerful *Okatomo* dog, a perfect *Kaigyokusai* jewel, a strong unsigned 18th C. figure, a glowing wood zodiac by *Sukenaga*. In fact, I have haunted auction exhibitions, museums, conventions, and antique shows with the intention

of experiencing as many as possible—poor, middling, good, and great. I've read all the books, talked to experts, met a number of very patient and helpful dealers and collectors. Through this I have learned to recognize characteristics of a fine netsuke: brilliance of carving, originality of design and use of material, patina, depth of feeling,

strength, and humor (I do not feel that signature and provenance have any bearing on its intrinsic artistic value).

However, just as very few lovers of paintings can own a Titian, Rembrandt, or Monet masterpiece, few netsuke lovers can afford a netsuke universally recognized as great. The netsuke collector with limited funds must make a choice—whether to save his money to obtain a few fine pieces, or to purchase, with discrimination, a number of “lesser” ones. I chose the latter course—to forgo the considerable pleasure of owning a great netsuke for the different pleasure (and agony) of “small-time” collecting. For less than the cost of one Kyoto school *shi-shi* exhibited at the Washington Convention I have collected fifty netsuke. They are by no means “great” pieces, nor are they necessarily to everyone’s taste (how many works of art are?), but they all have one important thing in common - I like them.

I believe there are quite a few people like me in the netsuke world who need to know that it is still possible to collect decent pieces without going into bankruptcy!

By careful selection, by passing over lovely netsuke just out of my financial reach, I have managed to develop a personally satisfying collection made up of pieces costing between \$50 and \$500. (Forty years ago, of course, this might have purchased one of today’s magnificent collections.)



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

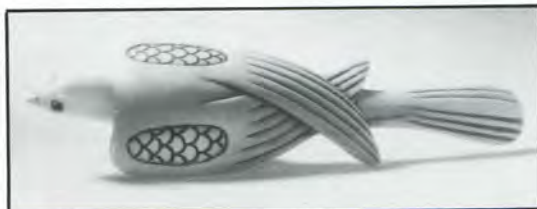


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Among my favorites are the following:

A small, graceful boxwood horse on a plinth. Ca. 1800. (Fig.1).

A strong, well-carved bull and calf. Ebony with inlaid eyes. (Fig.2).

A 3½” tall ivory laughing man with his hat slung over his shoulder. Late 19th C. Signed. (Fig. 3).

An unusual 5½” long ivory bird with large inlaid jet eyes. Ca. 1850. Signed. The wings are crossed giving it a pleasing sweep. This piece was passed over at auction because of damage that in no way diminishes its simple grace. (Fig.4).

An amusing stag antler netsuke of a rare subject, a tadpole, by a little-known 19th C. carver, Masaya. Inlaid eyes. (Fig.5).

Two simple netsuke (Fig. 6).

- a wood *manju* with bronze flower. Ca. 1870
- an ebony tree trunk on which is affixed a red coral flower (one flower is missing). Ca. 1825.

The contrasting materials and colors make these pieces particularly appealing.

A flat hollow ivory gourd. It has a silver top, stem, and holding band. The gourd has a lovely design of leaves and flowers in black and gold lacquer. Ca. 1800. (Fig.7).

A lucky find of a very finely carved netsuke of a baby holding a drum on his shoulder. Ivory with attractive green and brown polychrome details. Ca. 1920. Signed, with an inlaid gold tablet. The

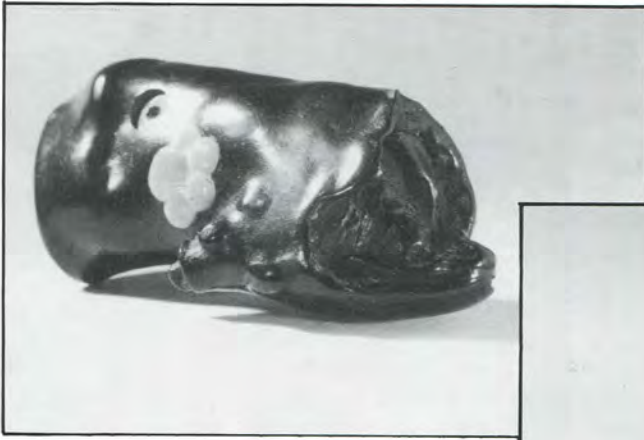


Fig. 6a



Fig. 6b

Fig. 7



Fig. 8

himotoshi is supported by inlay. (Fig.8).

Animals in wood by the 20th C. carver, *Toko*. These netsuke have a folk-like charm and humor. (Fig.9).

Contemporary netsuke by artists such as *Yukimasa*, *Ikko (Masakatsu)*, *Shingetsu*, *Gyokuzan*, *Muramatsu*, *Kazuo*, and *Masami*. Although perhaps not as original in conception, nor as consistently fine in execution, as the work of *Masatoshi*, *Hideyuki*, *Kangyoku*, and other artists in the "top twenty", many netsuke by these artists are of excellent quality. Particularly appealing to me are:

A "fish-catch basket" by *Kazuo*, carved in

boxwood to represent a woven basket with a large carp curled on the bottom. Both the hollow basket and carp are very finely detailed. The eye is inlaid. (Fig.10).

A fine boxwood netsuke of a "Go Board" with ivory, enamel, and silver inlay. Also by *Kazuo*. (Fig.11).

A small resting calf, nicely carved by *Masami*. Stained boxwood with inlaid eyes. (Fig.12).

A lovely stylized "wild goose in flight" in lightly stained ivory. Inlaid eyes. Signed *Shingetsu* (Fig.13).

Of the pieces pictured here four cost less than



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

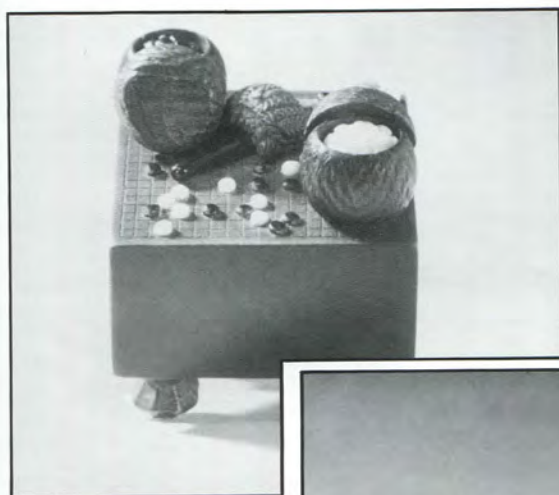


Fig. 11

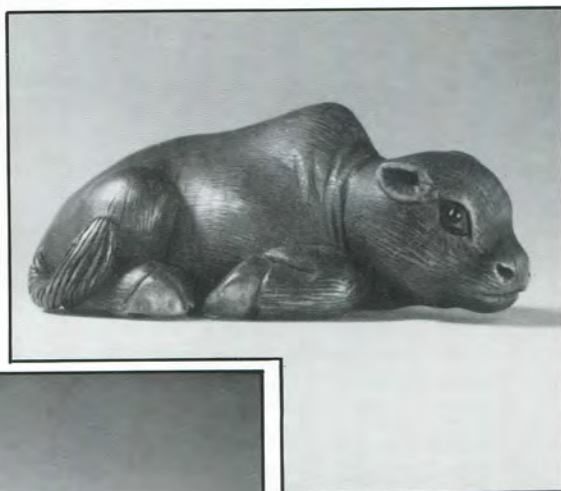


Fig. 12

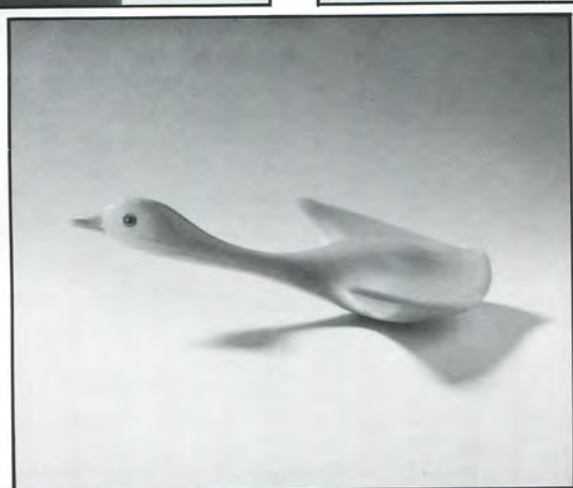


Fig. 13

\$100 each, six were between \$100 and \$250, and five were in the \$300-\$500 range. These prices may no longer be obtained today, but my "bargain" purchases illustrate the reward of diligent search and recognition of skill before the "crowd" discovers the merit of an emerging artist; with consequent popularity and enhancement in price. For those who traffic in greatness, these netsuke may be

beneath consideration since "no netsuke under \$3,000 is worth collecting," "they have no resale value," "there's no 'name' artist in the lot," "contemporary pieces are not real netsuke....." However, just as a landscape by a minor painter of the Dutch school may bring delight to its owner, so a "lesser" netsuke may give considerable pleasure to the collector of limited means. ■

A charming and inventive *obi-hasami* netsuke of a dancing monkey, by *Ozaki Kokusai*, about 1870.

The globular head is pegged on to the slender, stylised body, with the long tail reaching down to emerge under the *obi*; and the details of eyes, nose and mouth are suggested by the seal signature *Koku*. Well-known examples are documented of *Kokusai* netsuke with features indicated by the word "Zen", but the only other published example of a "*Koku*" face seems to be the cat-headed finial of a tubular piece illustrated as one of the signatures in Bushell's "Collectors'-Netsuke", p. 148. This appears to be the only known animal with a signature for a face.



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A FEW MORE EARLY

LINK TOKOKUS

Paul Moss



detail of Fig. 1

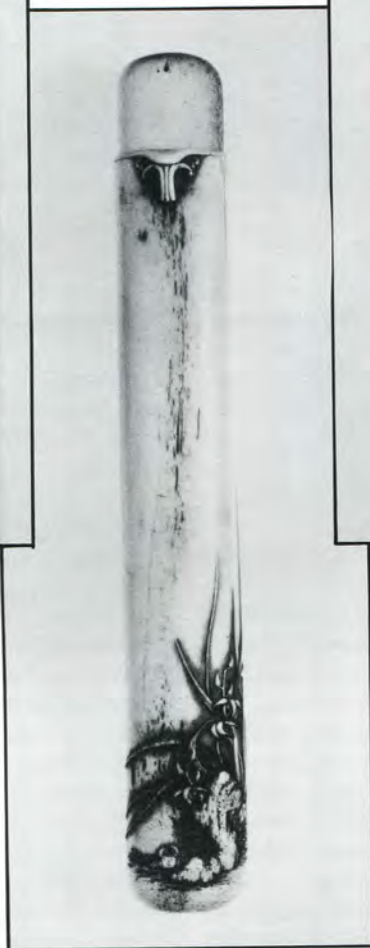
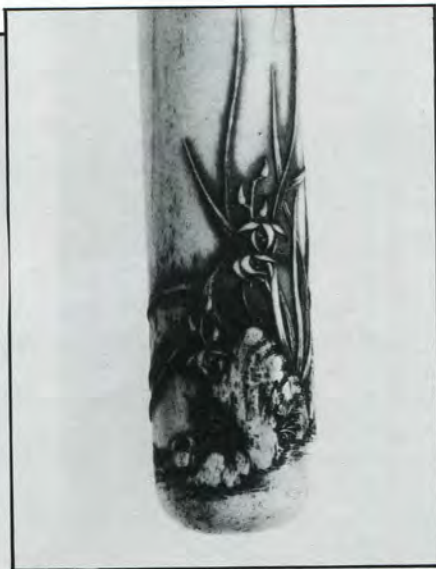


Fig. 1



detail of Fig. 1

Since publishing a number of marine ivory and stag-antler netsuke, and a rare pipecase set, in *Netsuke Kenkyukai Study Journal* (Vol. 2, No. 3) and in my exhibition catalogue, "Eccentrics in Netsuke" (October, 1982), I have come across and purchased a small body of further examples of Tokoku's early work in the Asakusa spirit, and linking that style to his later inlaying type.

The first is a stag-antler pipecase which Irving Gould was kind enough to sell to me (illustrated as Fig. 1). It is quite different from the one illustrated on the cover of the *N. K. Study Journal*,

Vol. 2, No. 3, but comparable to the only other Tokoku stag-antler pipecase I have seen published. (The other piece is illustrated in the catalogue which accompanied the Cologne Symposium exhibition in September, 1982, "Netsuke, Inro und andere Sagemono," Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Köln, as no. N/16,

on p. 117. Unfortunately the upper part is a lacquer replacement, but the main part of the case features a relief design of elegant, flowing orchids growing downward from a rock face, very similar in style to Fig. 1, and presumably from the same period. It is signed with the full signature *Tokoku Suzuki Fuzui*,



Fig. 2a



Fig. 2b

with a metal seal *Bairyu*.) Similar to the Tokyo relief ivory pipecases in type, Fig. 1 nonetheless reflects in the stylised cord attachment and in the typical motif of the crab (see Fig. 1a) the carver's Asakusa origins. The waving fronds of wild orchid above the rock seem to me to echo the designs of *Tokoku's ryusa*, with their elements of graceful magnolia, clouds, and moon; or pine, prunus, and bamboo.

However, apart from pointing out the wide range of *Tokoku's* carving of pipecases, which tends to indicate that many more must exist, this piece is particularly notable for its inscription (Fig. 1b). It is signed with his art name, *Bairyu sanjin*, his name, *Tokoku*, and his gold seal, *Bairyu*. The signature is preceded by a cyclical date corresponding to 1879 (mid-autumn). This fits in well with Meinertzhagen's statement in his British Museum Netsuke Card File that after 1873 *Tokoku* made *kiseruzutsu*, none of which had at that time been recorded.

Another documentary example is shown as Fig. 2a and 2b. It is a *manju*, surely one of the most ornate and striking in design known, and a collaborative work which gives the lie to those who would scorn the *manju* form. This piece offers a range of textures, materials, and design effects which would simply not be available to the artist in a fully three-dimensional form. Again, as an historical document it is fascinating.

What is hard to distinguish in a black and white reproduction is that the stippled surface of the

trellis bars and some of the vine leaves are in marine ivory, that other leaves are in gold and silver, and that the Daruma meditating inside the overgrown cave is carved of a single large lump of coral, with inlaid silver face, and gold eyes and earrings. The colour combination is most impressive.

The reverse is signed on a silver plaque with the signature *Tokoku* (for the marine ivory), on a gold plaque *Katsumori* (for the metalwork) and, inside the trellis on the reverse, on the coral, *Mingen*, on a gold plaque, (for the carving of the coral). The name *Katsumori* refers to *Nomura Katsumori*, a leading pupil of the great metalworker *Kano Natsuo*. I am told by friends versed in the ways of metalworkers that his work would help to date the piece to about the 1870s, a time for transition between Asakusa types and Tokyo inlaid types for *Tokoku* -- with which I can find no argument.

The name *Mingen* is not recorded, but the characters are those found in the name *Genryosai Minkoku*. I consider it likely that the carver was a late 19th C. member of this Tokyo carving family (*Minkoku*) for the additional reason that, of the very few netsuke incorporating coral that I have seen, other than one or two by *Rensai*, interestingly, most have been ebony inlaid coral divers by (*Genryosai*) *Minkoku*. There are in addition several Tokyo/Asakusa stained ivory *ryusa/manju* with metal inlay on the front, signed *Genmin*, who may even be the same artist as this *Mingen*, or related



Fig. 3a



Fig. 3b



Fig. 4a

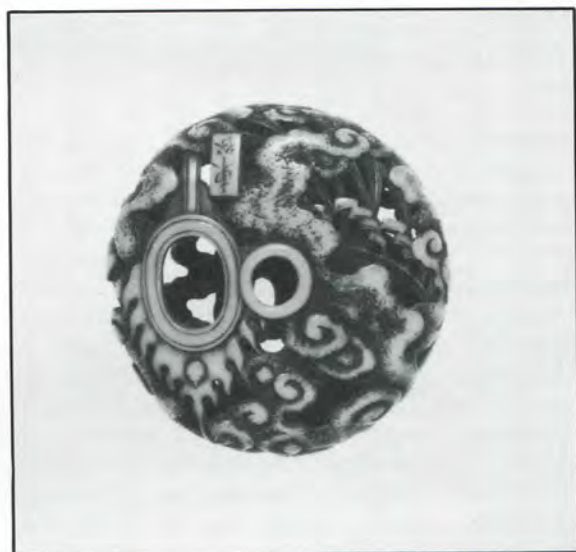


Fig. 4b

to him. In any case, the *manju* is fascinating as a superb collaboration, interesting for the placing of Tokoku in league with a known Tokyo metalworker and a presumably Tokyo carver in an inlaying style, in a design and format a little further along the road from his floral *ryusa* designs. There are, incidentally, quite a few of these Tokoku early floral *ryusa* in the Hull Grundy gift of 55 Asakusa netsuke to the British Museum.

I should mention here another piece, here illustrated, Fig. 3a and 3b, which I saw recently in Virginia Atchley's collection. It is a gilt-copper *kagamibuta* with *Handaka Sonja* in high relief. The bowl is of marine ivory, and among the stippled, clouds is a scaly dragon, a reference to the subject of the plate. The bowl is by Tokoku, and we discovered on pushing off the plate that it was by

(Ito) Masayoshi, which may again help to date this early work of Tokoku to about the early Meiji period suggested. This dating of Tokoku's transition from Asakusa to inlaid Tokyo style about 1870 may also indicate the date of the end of the vogue for *Kokusai-bori*.

Figs. 1 and 2 show the more interesting documentary pieces, filling out and helping to date the early and transitional periods of Tokoku's work, but Figs. 4 and 5 demonstrate the range of his efforts within those styles. Fig. 4 (a and b) shows a marine ivory *ryusa*, similar in technique to the floral examples, illustrated elsewhere, but on this occasion with a figure subject. On the front is a *Nio* (temple guardian) holding a *kongo*, and on the reverse a flaming banner (*dadaikon*) with a star at the top, and a string of temple banner-ties (*shi*



Fig. 5

menawa), all among the stippled clouds common among these *ryusa*. It is signed on a rectangular reserve *Tokoku*, and like Fig. 1 came from the Irving Gould collection. The use of Buddhist subject matter and symbolism continued to tie *Tokoku* to his *Asakusa* origins even after he abandoned the style, forms and material of *Kokusai-bori*.

Fig. 3 is a solid ivory *mokugyo* with a double dragon-head, a typical *Asakusa* subject deeply and strongly carved in pure ivory, and bearing a scratchy but convincing *Tokoku* seal-form signature.

Another fascinating link piece, which claims quite a pedigree for itself, is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Kroch, in Chicago. Fig. 6a and b. It is a late but expressive three-dimensional ivory netsuke of a parent *oni* seated on a drum and gripping its offspring's loincloth as the baby peeks over the edge of the drum to read the long inscription underneath. The quality of the carving is not bad for a late netsuke of this essentially *okimono* type, but it is the inscription itself which I find its most appealing aspect. It reads "copied by *Meido* (with his seal, *Cho*) after the version by *Tokoku* of *Jugyoku's* masterpiece." The word used for "copy" is *utsusu*, to copy, design, or portray, Chinese *hsieh*. The word for which I have given "version" is *baku*, or *saguru*, Chinese *mo*, which again literally means to trace, or copy; the term translated as

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"L'ao T'se Riding the Unicorn," 19th century, ivory with silver horn, unsigned.

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Wooden netsuke of a coiled rat.
Signed *Masanao (Yamada)*. 19th C. Height: 1 1/4"



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Fig. 6a



Fig. 6b

“masterpiece” is *ketsu-saku*, Chinese *chieh-tso*, literally the work of a hero, or worthy, but given in my dictionary as masterpiece. I have never seen this term used on a netsuke before: and overall it seems to me that this conscious referral to a lineage for a netsuke model and its carvers tells us something of the attitude of carvers to their work and predecessors at the time. *Asahi Meido* was a good Tokyo ivory carver who exhibited at the Columbian Exhibition in the USA in 1893, as we are told by Lazarnick. His reference to the master *Tokoku* copying the work of the master *Jugyoku* leads me to the observation that *Tokoku* probably imitated *Jugyoku*’s work on a number of occasions. The very fine, but rather damaged, large inlaid wood *Tokoku Shoki* standing and holding a small *oni* by his hand, published by Sotheby’s, Eskenazi, and Hurtig in the last few years, and now in a New Jersey collection, has its origins in *Jugyoku*’s model (illustrated in Lazarnick). Several of the So school masters’ favorite models also derived from *Jugyoku*’s work. His figural compositions were of particular importance to the late, crisply technical carvers whose perfection of execution apparently became the vogue after *Kokusai*’s *Asakusa* stag-antler style had had its day.

A typically lovely *Tokoku ryusa* with more than the usual amount of metal inlay was offered in Sotheby’s London sale of a European Collection, Part II, on the 14th March, 1984, as lot 234. A version of one of his favorite models, the magnolia tree with the moon peeping through clouds, in this instance the magnolia flowers and buds are feelingly inlaid in silver in such profusion and to such artistic

effect that one’s impression is that either the same carver in the same workshop made both marine ivory *ryusa* and metal inlays, or that there was a very close collaboration between carver and metalworker.

I hope these pieces further demonstrate the logical and consistent progress or, so some might say, slide, of the first *Suzuki Tokoku* from the aegis of *Asakusa* to the decadent perils of his own Tokyo inlay mastery and workshop style. Though the questions of collaboration with metalworkers remain unanswered in the case of unsigned metal elements, at least we know that some significant areas of metalwork were done in league with other, independent artists. This consistent tradition of fine work seems to me to indicate that the Tokyo-style wood figure carvings of average quality signed *Tokoku*, of which I have seen two, are far more likely to have been early student work of *Tokoku II* or *III*, if such existed, rather than *Suzuki Tokoku I*.

Those wood figures hardly fit in terms of the stylistic development I have outlined, which was consistently fine in execution, though varied in type, nor in terms of the time scale I have suggested for *Tokoku*’s development: *Kokusai-bori*, perhaps in the 1860s and early 1870s, probably as an independent carver inspired by *Kokusai*; transition in *manju* and pipecase form through the 1870s and maybe early 1880s -- to his well-known, mature style of crisply carved wood figures, mostly Buddhist, inlaid with diverse materials, by 1890 and until his death in 1912. ■

MONEY

by Betty Leavitt



All photos this article/Michael B. Glass

A funny kappais seated, peaking at a frog hiding under a lotus blossom. signed Masamitsu

I'm going to talk about money! Everybody in the netsuke world has suddenly become price conscious. It's time for a serious discussion. Money —the price of things. I don't know what has happened to all of us. We see great, great prices at auctions and all of a sudden, people who have been collecting for years are saying: "I can't afford to collect any more —prices are too high! I'm out of the market —just impossible! I'll just admire what I have — I might go to a flea market to see what I can find!"

Well, this might be true, but let me make an analysis. Supposing you needed to buy a house. You want to go South, you would like to find a new place to live. You have a certain amount of money that you can afford for a new home. And you look at newspapers and ad sections of magazines which advertise property. Now, if you wish to buy a three million dollar house you can locate one — if you're looking for a house that is an estate with ten acres or one in a prime location —or a gorgeous



Fig. 3. Ivory Karako with Daruma. Signed Sanraku.



Fig. 4. Reclining Oni. Ebony. (Doubles as a brush rest.) 18th C.



Fig. 2. Cluster of loquats. Ivory. Mid 19th C. Koshu.



Fig. 1. Shishi on base with foot on ball. 18th C. Gyoko

apartment in New York — each will be in the million dollar class. If you want to live in Palm Beach with ocean front property, you are going to pay!

However, if you do not want to spend so much, does it mean you cannot buy? If you want something in the sixty thousand dollar class, you can find it. I do not care in what section of the country in which you wish to live, it is available; you will discover a house you like at a price you can afford.

Is there any difference in buying a netsuke? It's all the same — it is *your* money! Buy what you can afford. If you want the very top pieces — the ones with great provenance that realize great prices, then you look for these items. And if you can afford them, buy them! If you are not particularly interested either in provenance or great signatures, you will not have to pay so much. Yet great netsuke by many great masters exist without either! There are so many, many good netsuke!

There are probably a million netsuke existing, not counting the ones made in the last ten years. Who can possibly know how many netsuke were carved? We now date netsuke back to the 17th C. We have from that period up through the 20th C. to study. Just think how the world of netsuke has enlarged.

If you are a collector who only wants netsuke that others consider great netsuke, and you can afford them, for goodness sake buy them! But don't think if some netsuke bring great prices it means that other masterpieces are not available.

Let me talk about mask netsuke as an example of price and signature. The classic story is that in 1974, Donald Mendelson bought a collection of 36 mask netsuke by *Hokkyo Hozan* in a fitted box made for them. He only paid \$6,000. Now if you divide \$6,000 by 36, you realize they were inexpensive — and the box was a bonus! In 1981, he



Fig. 5. Ivory puppy with inlaid eyes. Early 19th C. Unsigned.



Fig. 6. Seated laughing man holding a fan. Wood with Negoro lacquered coat. Early 19th C.

decided to sell them at Sotheby's sale at the INCS Convention, and that same box full of netsuke brought \$18,000. Divide \$18,000 by 36, and it's only \$500 per netsuke. Do you follow what I am trying to explain? It is positive proof that there are great buys!

Though very few people go to auctions, they do read auction catalogues. They get uptight when they read that someone paid \$40,000 or \$50,000 for one treasure. If the complainer would analyse the catalogue, he would realize that all prices are not high. Many times there are great buys.

I have been keeping a record of sales of netsuke at auction since 1970 which brought \$1,000 or over. Let me compare two catalogues: There was a *Rensai* tiger that was sold on March 7, 1979 by Sotheby's in London for \$5,000. An almost identical one was sold in Hawaii by Sotheby's at the 1981 INCS Convention, and brought only \$3,200. In two years *Rensai*'s prices did not increase but fell by \$1,800. A lovely caparisoned horse by the famous *Shibayama* at the same Sotheby sale in London of March 7, 1979 brought \$2,300. Yet another one (or was it the same one?) in Hawaii brought only \$1,700. Nearly twenty-five percent less in only two years.

Why? The one who bought the *Shibayama* in 1981 did not face so much competition. It takes two or more people, competing furiously, to make high auction prices. You do not bid against yourself! The excellence or lack of excellence of a piece at auction is not the decisive factor establishing its auction price. If you want a piece and can afford it, buy it and thank the world—don't fret. The market place had determined the price, and it was made by those who buy.

If you want a Picasso, you must pay a high amount. If you don't like his work, the price is immaterial. Does it stop you from purchasing a



Fig. 7. Rare cluster of three masks: *Okame, Hannya, Kobeshima*. Wood. 19th C.



Fig. 8. Two babies playing on a lock. Ivory. Signed *Hikaku*.



Fig. 9. Child's netsuke. Boy, riding a bull, playing a flute; a charming piece. 19th C.

painting for your own collection? Of course not! Publicity is the culprit because we make it so. It is news when someone pays \$3,000,000 for a work of art. Three hundred dollar ones are not news-worthy.

Going back to auctions —look at the real facts —what about the rest of the sale. Who cares who pays a great amount for a great netsuke? Be thankful that a collector bought it who will treasure and preserve it for future generations. If he can afford it, good for him. Your collection is just as satisfactory. Memories and joy of looking at it are what make a fine collection — not what it costs!

What if the dollar goes down and a piece such as you own sells for less than you paid? Does it demean the netsuke? No! Enjoyment is the factor, not the price. So buy what you can afford. You can't eat netsuke, so let them feed your soul. Let your eye govern your buying. For under \$5,000 you can buy more netsuke than would fit in a \$3,000,000 house! If only money interests you, invest in the stock market and listen to what Hutton says. ■

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Ivory foreigner
with monkey

Unsigned
18th Century
Height: 13.5 cms



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