UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI
FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

KATEDRA DĚJIN UMĚNÍ

Netsuke from Joe Hloucha's Collections at Náprstek Museum in Prague

Master's Thesis

Necuke ze sbírek Joe Hlouchy v Náprstkově muzeu v Praze

magisterská diplomová práce

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Olomouc 2023

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V Olomouci dne: 9. prosince 2023

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank doc. PhDr. Tomáš Winter, Ph.D. for his skilled supervision of my work on this thesis and his patience. Secondly, I would like to express my gratitude to the staff of Náprstek Museum for their time and help. I would also like to give thanks to all the various people that were in my life throughout these past few years, who encouraged me in my work, my friends and family, as well as all the random people in the internet space who were kind enough to share tips and resources with me. And lastly, I would like to thank the community of LOTR University Memes for being there for students who are lost in the darkness and need a spark of light to show them the way.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The following thesis will be focusing on *netsuke*, small fashion accessories originating from Japan, specifically on those in the collections of Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures in Prague, that came from a Bohemian writer and traveller Joe Hloucha. The Japanese Collection of this particular museum is vast, counting some 22 000 objects in total. Much smaller collections can be found in museums and galleries around Czech Republic, for example in National Gallery Prague, Museum of West Bohemia in Pilsner, or the North Bohemian Museum in Liberec. Unfortunately, not much research has been done on the collections in Náprstek Museum and the items are not put on display very frequently. This is a much more complex issue, where this art form became the focus of foreign art collectors, instead of being recognized as an important part of Japanese cultural heritage, to such extent that the greatest collections and literature on this topic lie in Western countries. Among the first books focusing on the topic that were published on the European continent was called simply *Netsuke*, and it was written by Albert Brockhaus and published in 1909 in Leipzig.

This thesis hopes to bring more attention to the collection in Náprstek Museum and spark interest of future researchers, from Czechia and other countries. That is also the reason why the language that this thesis is written in, is English, and not Czech, as the possible reach of this text is much wider that way.

As Japanese traditional clothing lacked pockets, people used their wide sleeves, or the *obi* sash of the *kimono* to store small objects, like medicine, tobacco, money, or personal seals that were used instead of signing a name in hand, which is more common in the West. Objects that were hung from the *obi* sash, or attached to swords and daggers, were collectively known as *sagemono*. They are held to the *obi* sash with an *ojime* bead and a *netsuke* on the top of the sash, which holds it in place. Among these were also *inrō,* small boxes, divided into several compartments that are nested into each other, usually made from lacquer ware. Another wide group of *sagemono* that were widely used throughout Edo period were tobacco pouches. Both of these were often paired with their own *netsuke*. The word *netsuke* is often translated as ‘button,’ but the literal translation of the Japanese symbols should be ‘root’ and ‘attach.’ This can point to the original material used for *netsuke*, before they became more of an art form, which were small gourds. Traditionally, *sagemono*

and *netsuke* were worn by men, whereas women carried small items in their sleeves or small purses known as *kinchaku*.[1]

These fashion accessories came into wider use during the 17th century and they became popular amongst foreign travellers and art collectors after Japan opened up its borders after a period of almost 300 years of isolation, known as *sakoku,* which essentially banned all foreigners from entering the country and trading relations were severely limited. [2] The Meiji revolution that brought down the Tokugawa shogunate and restored the political power back into the hands of the emperor meant that the country was open to the whole world. Japan quickly became a popular destination for travellers, writers, artists and, unsurprisingly, art collectors. The mystery shrouding the country enchanted many and the art pieces that were brought into the Western countries directly impacted the artistic world there.

The focus of this work are the objects that were brought from Japan in the beginning of the 20th century by a Bohemian traveller and a writer Joe Hloucha, who dedicated his life to collecting objects of various artistic and ethnographic value from around the world. Major part of his collection was focused on Japan, which was his main interest throughout his whole life. Hloucha published his first book that took place in this country before he even made his first trip there and it became a long-time hit. He wrote several books of quite good quality that were inspired by his two trips to Japan, but he drew ideas from stories from other travellers, local folklore and legends as well. At times, it is hard to distinguish which parts of his books are based on real-life events and which are pure fiction. His writings helped to popularize the country and its culture in the Czech lands at the time, great example of his impact among ordinary folk being his most popular book, *Sakura in the Storm*, which got reprinted twelve times. Hloucha accompanied his texts with coloured photographs that he took himself during his travels and with illustrations based on Japanese woodblock prints. Several of his books were published in bookbinding techniques resembling the ones used in the eastern country.[3]

[1] Alice Kraemerová – Jan Šejbl, *Japan, my love*, Praha 2007 pp. 183–184.
[2] Edwin O. Reischauer and Albert M. Craig, *Dějiny Japonska*, Praha 2012, pp. 90–92.
[3] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), pp. 154–159.

Apart from writings, he helped to bring pieces of Japan into Prague in other ways. Hloucha, together with his brother, opened a Japanese tearoom called Yokohama in the Lucerna Palace in Prague. The brothers ran it until the beginning of World War I. The waitresses wore traditional Japanese *kimonos* and the interior was decorated in Japanese style.[4] Joe Hloucha also held numerous exhibitions of his collections throughout his life, the first ones of them as a fairly young boy.[5] Due to financial problems, he had to sell some of his collected items and in the end arranged that his whole collection would become the property of the National Museum in Prague and he would be paid a monthly sum of money until the end of his life. After his death, most of the collections, containing several thousand objects, found their new permanent home in Náprstek Museum in Prague.[6]

This work will be divided into several chapters. The first one will focus on the writer and traveller Joe Hloucha. A short biography will be included, as well as a part focusing on his contributions to Náprstek Museum and to the field of Japanese studies. This particular field of studies was founded only after the Second World War and travellers and enthusiasts, like Hloucha himself, served as the stepping stones for the future academic field.

Another chapter will focus on *netsuke* in greater detail, keeping in mind that the readers of this work might come from various academic backgrounds. This chapter will describe the history of these accessories, their development from functional to ornamental pieces and how they spread outside of Japan, after the Meiji revolution at the end of 19th century. *Netsuke* come in number of types, depending on shape, theme, or the materials used and the most common ones will be introduced.

Further on, we will be focusing on the objects in the Japanese collection in Náprstek museum themselves. From the total number of 285 *netsuke*, 84 of them came from Hloucha. The objects vary in quality, but those that are lacking in technical value often offer some sort of rarity or interesting look into the period of their creation. The *netsuke* will be divided by their type, as is common in the community of art historians and auction houses. In this part of the research, the museum's inventory cards, which were kindly offered to examine, will be consulted. The aim is to analyse each piece, its subject

[4] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 151.
[5] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 162.
[6] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 168.

and material and to apply knowledge gathered throughout the author's studies to evaluate their overall quality and historical and artistic value, and to determine the period of their production, if possible.

The aim of this work is to offer a comprehensive guide to the miniature art form of *netsuke*, which is, unfortunately, oftentimes omitted by art history, both in Japan and abroad, and to bring attention to the collections in Náprstek Museum in Prague. Since 1960s, when the publication of the *Annals of Náprstek Museum* began, some 16 articles in them focused on the Japanese Collection in some way or another. None of them focus on *netsuke*, but one, written by the current curator of Japanese Collection, Alena Tůmová, focuses on *inrō*. Others focus on subjects like Japanese prints, stencils, folding screens, or dolls.

A catalogue accompanying an exhibition of Japanese miniature sculpture, organized by Náprstek museum, was published in 1962. It was put together by Libuše Boháčková, who was the head of Japanese collection of the museum later during the 1980s. The catalogue contains a list of the exhibited pieces, more than 520 *inrō* and *netsuke* in total. The short introduction contains a text written by Lubor Hájek, the founder of the Department of Oriental Art of the National Gallery Prague. Given the period and the political situation in Czechoslovakia, it is no surprise that the text reflects quite a lot of socialist propaganda, which was inevitable during those times. The text is only a couple of pages long and offers a very short introduction to the history of *inrō* and *netsuke.* If we take the time and look up in the inventory numbers of netsuke from Hloucha's collection, since it is not indicated in the catalogue text from where the small sculptures came into the museum's possession, we can find 75 out of the 84 pieces this work will focus on. Upon close reading, the list of objects shows the importance of decades of continuous museum work. In many cases, the materials of the objects differ, as well as their dating or size. A few inventory numbers don't even match with the correct piece. Even though the catalogue doesn't offer much, except for some 300 black-and-white photographs, it shows that the pieces from Hloucha have a good quality, considering almost all of them were chosen for such an exhibition.

An important book about Joe Hloucha, published by the Náprstek Museum in 2007, was written by the former curator of the Japanese Collection Alice Kraemerová, and Jan Šejbl. The book, called *Japan, my love*, contains texts in Czech as well as in English and hence offers a great opportunity to foreigners who might have further interest in Hloucha's life. Apart from

that, it offers valuable information about his Japanese collection. Only one other book focusing on Hloucha was published, and that was Antonín Václav Šmejkal's *Milenec Nipponu: Tři lásky Joe Hlouchy,*[7] published in 1931. It is important to state that this particular book should be taken with a generous grain of salt, as it is a mix of facts and fiction.

As there is only a small number of literature that would focus on *netsuke* and it can be tricky to find, hopefully this work will serve to many future researchers as a place to start their journey to learning about these incredible miniature sculptures. Museum objects will be sorted by their type first and then by their inventory numbers, to make further research and navigation easier.

[7] Nippon's Lover: Three Loves of Joe Hloucha (Author's note).

1. JOE HLOUCHA

In the following chapter, we will be focusing on the figure of Josef, commonly known as Joe, Hloucha, a traveller, writer, and probably most importantly, a collector from Czech lands. He became quite known during the early 20th century through his publications that were focusing on Japan, or Nippon[8], which was the name commonly used during those times in Czech language. Hloucha remains an important figure in the development of Japanese studies in Czechoslovakia and his collection, majority of whichbelongs to Náprstek Museum in Prague, counts thousands of objects. During his life, he visited Japan twice and brought back not only physical objects, but stories of the country. During his first trip to the Japanese Isles, he also became the first Czech person that we know of that climbed the famous Mount Fuji.[9] He wrote several books that drew inspiration from his own experiences, as well as local folklore. Hloucha's collections of Japanese fairy tales offer not only retellings of famous stories from the Land of the Rising sun, but important ethnological insight into the society and educational system of Japan shortly after the beginning of industrialization.

1.1 EARLY LIFE

Josef, later in his life known as Joe, Hlouha was born on the 4th of September, 1881 in a small place of Podkováň near Mladá Boleslav, in Central Bohemian region of what is nowadays Czechia. Back in the time of Hloucha's birth, the country existed under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His father, Josef as well, was a maltster at the local beer brewery, which still stands today. Four of his siblings died in young age, but four more made it into adulthood, an elder sister Anna, named after her mother, and brother Karel, and a younger brother Jiří and a sister Jiřina. Joe had the closest relationship with his older brother Karel, who became a sci-fi writer later on. As young boys, they started writing stories together and when older, they put together theatre plays for family and friends. In later years, Joe and Karel also led the *Yokohama* tearoom in Prague.[10]

In 1885, the Hloucha family moved to Libochovice, where young Joe began his education at the local elementary school. Later, he studied at the grammar school in Mladá Boleslav.

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[8] One of the possible phonetic transcriptions of the original Japanese kanji 日本（にほん）.

[9] Jaromír Václav Šmejkal, *Milenec Nipponu: Tři lásky Joe Hlouchy*, Praha 1931, p. 45.

[10] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 148.

In 1895, the whole family moved to Prague, where their father leased a famous St Thomas brewery. Young Joe kept quite detailed diaries and as they are part of Náprstek Museum's library nowadays, they are a great source of wide spectrum of information on life of a middle-class family in Bohemia at the end of 19th century. Joe wrote about his family's trips in the same descriptive style as was used years later in his books.[11]

1.2 EARLY INTEREST IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Joe Hloucha's interest in travelling and faraway countries began sprouting in young age. An uncle from his mother's side was a famous traveller and writer, Josef Kořenský, who was a major influence on young Hloucha. His *Journey Around the World* contained parts and pictures from Japan and for young Joe, those were among the first drops of knowledge that would later become a lifelong devotion.[12] Kořenský wrote over thirty books about his travels around the world and as a teacher, he chose such language that his stories were understandable to educated readers as well as laics. He travelled around the world and helped to expand the horizons of Czech readers of that time, concerning distant countries. Kořenský was a part of a group of travellers that was often meeting at the *U Halánků* house, which belonged to Vojta Náprstek, the eventual founder of Náprstek Museum. As we can see, Hloucha had a very good foundation for his future as a traveller and art collector.[13]

Hloucha visited Náprstek Museum for the first time when he was seventeen years old and the experience led him into founding his first collection. In the beginning, it contained objects from his travels around Czech lands, but only four months later, it already held almost 200 items, many of them from Prague art dealers, some of which came from China and Japan. He held his first exhibitions in his room and even showed his collection to friends and family for a small entry fee.[14]

His father wanted him to have a steady job that would earn his son a respectable place in society. Even though Joe successfully finished business academy in Prague and wanted

[11] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 149.
[12] Šmejkal (note 8), p. 31.
[13] Šmejkal (note 8), p. 32.
[14] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 149.

to travel and write, upon his father's wishes he went on to study accounting at the Czech University in Prague for two terms. After that he worked as a civil servant and had to do six months of compulsory military service. Hloucha continued to collect and study foreign art pieces. He occasionally held exhibitions at his house with invitation-only attendance and his reputation as an art collector got him his first requests for exhibition loans. During this time, he frequented the house *U Halánků*, which belonged to the Náprstek family and was a famous spot for writers, scientists, politicians, travellers, art collectors and many more to meet and exchange their stories and ideas. Hloucha helped Josefa Náprstková, whose husband and founder of the museum had been dead by that time, to classify and annotate some parts of the collections of Náprstek Museum.[15]

It was through Josefa Náprstková that Joe Hloucha met his first Japanese acquaintance, officer and a baron, Eitaro Nambu who was sent to Czech lands to study the local horse breeding.[16] This was the first opportunity to practice the self-taught Japanese that Hloucha had been learning from the few English books that were available. As the baron became a frequent guest at the St Thomas Brewery that belonged to the Hloucha family, Joe had plenty of opportunities to practice his Japanese language skills.[17] During Hloucha's first trip to Japan, he admittedly visited the baron's family while he was travelling around the city of Kamakura.[18]

1.3 FIRST JOURNEY TO JAPAN

Hloucha started actively writing and publishing in his 20s as well, namely for the magazines Český Svět and Světozor. His articles focused on Japan, even though he still hadn't made his pilgrimage there by that time. Major literary success came upon young Joe after the publication of his first novel, *Sakura in the Storm*, in the year 1905. The book was met with a wide success and had to be reprinted more than ten times to satisfy the demand. It is clear that Japan as a country and the characters in his work were inspired by Hloucha's dreams and ideals, rather than based on realistic images. By that time, the Japan that Joe dreamt of, the one that the first Western travellers encountered after the Meiji

[15] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 150.
[16] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 150.
[17] Šmejkal (note 8), p. 34.
[18] Šmejkal (note 8), p. 45.

restoration in the second half of the 19th century, was already very much gone and lost to westernization of the whole country. But romantic stories from the Orient were widely popular in Bohemia around that time and so it did not come as a much of a surprise that Hloucha's sentimental love story of a Czech traveller and collector that falls in love with a Japanese girl named Sakura became a hit.[19]

The book's success was enough to finally help Joe's dream of visiting Japan to become true. His father was finally convinced that travels and collecting are his son's true calling and decided to pay him his share of family property, which was enough to pay for his first journey to the Land of the Rising Sun, which he set on in 1906.[20]

The journey itself, back then via steamboat, took him two months. Overall, he took some nine-month-long sabbatical from his life in Prague. Once on Japanese land, he began his travels in Kobe, where he was given some valuable beginner's advice by a fellow Czech, Karel Hora, who was a mechanical engineer. He studied in the United States and then settled in Japan, where he, apart from learning Japanese and Chinese, collected art as well. Hora also married there and his wife, Fuku Hora was the first historically known Japanese woman that mastered Czech language. The life of the couple would surely supply interesting research material.[21]

After Kobe, Hloucha spent two months in Osaka and then three months in Tokyo, by that time the capital of Japan. To some extent, he was disappointed, for he was met with Japan that was gradually turning more and more Western, in fashion, culture, customs and lifestyle as well. But there were still flashes of the old country, shrouded in mystery, that he fell in love with. Hloucha was quite enchanted by Japanese traditional cultural life and religion, as well as kabuki theatre. Luckily, these things were not swept by the wave of modernization, as they were popular among foreign travellers in their original form. They carried the essence of the old country, so to say. Next to traditional dance festivals and theatres, Joe Hloucha visited quite a few Buddhist and Shinto[22] temples and shrines, as he admired their architecture and décor.[23]

[19] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 154.
[20] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 151.
[21] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 159.
[22] Original Japanese religion that is very closely tied to nature and shamanism.
[23] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 160.

Not only did Hloucha wear traditional Japanese clothing during his stay in the country, he took his sampling of Japanese life to another level by entering a temporary contract marriage. His wife, Tama, kept him company for three months, became his advisor in buying Japanese antiquities and served as an object of his ethnographic studies. [24] Later, she became the main female character of the book *My Lady Chysantemum* (1910), which was a paraphrase on the book *Madame Chrysanthème* by a French traveller and writer, Pierre Loti, who was one of Hloucha's influences and whom he kept a correspondence with for some time.[25]

The collector did not really have a system of purchase and he would buy whatever objects he fancied. Even though he was a self-taught in the ways of arts, he had quite a good taste and rarely bought lower-grade pieces. Gradually, through experience, he gained the knowledge and the eye for spotting truly valuable objects. He focused mostly on graphic art, no doubt because it was easy to store and transport across the world with small to no damage. Next, he collected scroll paintings, books, religious pieces, fans, porcelain, clothing accessories and especially toys. Apart from buying art, Hloucha would document daily life of Japanese people around him and so we can get a glimpse of an old country that is now long gone, with the addition of comparison to life in Bohemia of those times.[26]

After returning back to his homeland, Hloucha, together with his brother, opened up a Japanese tearoom at the Jubilee Exhibition in Prague in 1908. They even consulted the design of the pavilion with Josef Kotěra, a leading figure of early 20th century modern architecture in Czech lands.[27] It was quite a huge success that led to the brothers opening the *Yokohama* tearoom permanently in the newly opened Palace Lucerna at the Wenceslas square in Prague in 1909, after being approached by the owner of the building himself. The interior was furnished and decorated in Japanese style and even had a small home shrine, which are common part of households in Japan. The space was in business for several years and the décor stayed in place until 1924, even under new owners. Apart from *Yokohama,* the Hloucha brothers also led the *Alhambra* night club for couple of years until 1920, which offered visitors entertainment with Oriental tones.[28]

[24] Šmejkal (note 8), pp. 39 – 44.
[25] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 156.
[26] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 161.
[27] Šmejkal (note 8), p. 68.
[28] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 151.

Even though the time was quickly passing since Hloucha's first trip to Japan, it was impossible to travel there again due to The Great War, but he managed to create a small island of Japanese culture around himself in Prague. Apart from the businesses, he let his admiration for Japanese culture show in the form of a villa Sakura in Roztoky near Prague. The house was renovated with nods to Japanese architecture, captivating the passer-by mostly with the shape of the roof and the Japanese garden built around the house. Hloucha sold the villa after only two years and moved to Hřebenky.[29]

He was ready to leave for his second, and last, trip to the Land of the Rising sun in 1914, but instead he had to focus on managing his collections and further studies. When he had the chance, he talked about Japan with members of the Czechoslovak Legions that had to take the long way across Russia via Trans-Siberian Railway and then Japan. [30] What was an unfortunate political complication and a delay of seeing their families for many of the soldiers, was an important seed of Japanese-Czechoslovak relations. Austrian-Hungarian Empire fell apart and independent Czechoslovak republic was funded in 1918 and in the spring of the same year, the future president of the country, T.G. Masaryk visited Tokyo to help negotiate ways for the soldiers to return to continental Europe.[31]

1.4 SECOND JOURNEY TO JAPAN

When Hloucha finally left for Japan the second time, it was already the year 1926 and the bureaus were much more open to Czechoslovak travellers exporting art out of the country than before and there was even a Czechoslovak ambassador available, since Czechoslovakia became an independent country. During his first trip, he had to deal with the office of Austro-Hungarian Empire, which were of very little assistance to an unknown traveller from Bohemia. He also made acquaintance with the Japanese ambassador in Prague and met with the family during their holiday while he was travelling.[32]

Japan went through many changes during the twenty years that passed. The industrialization and overall visual transformation that the central part of the country went through was even

[29] Šmejkal (note 8), p. 70.
[30] Ibidem.
[31] Jakub Štofaník, Tokio: Návštěva T. G. Masaryka, *Po stopách T. G. Masaryka*, Praha, http://tg-masaryk.cz/mapa/index.jsp?id=307&misto=Navsteva-T.-G.-Masaryka, 1. 2. 2023.
[32] Šmejkal (note 8), p. 71.

more evident because of the Great Kanto Earthquake that struck in 1923 and took over 100 000 lives and which was the cause of destruction of majority of buildings, especially in the capital city of Tokyo.[33]

During this trip, Hloucha travelled through the islands of Honshu and Kyushu. He began his journey in Tokyo, where he spent a month, then moved to Hiroshima for three weeks, after which he spent two months in Kyoto. He finished his journey back in Tokyo where he spent his final month in Japan. From there he took a ship to Vancouver, travelled across Canada, followed up by a trip to England. The journey took him only a month, which only shows how the world became connected over the twenty years that passed between Hloucha's trips to Japan.[34]

1.5 BACK IN PRAGUE

After he returned to Prague, Hloucha travelled to other European countries to visit museums and their Japanese collections and devoted his time to writing more books, all of which, except for one, focus on Japan. The topics he covered varied from traditional fairy tales of the country, temples and religion, together with various gods and demons of the Japanese folklore, or his favourite geishas and courtesans. His last book, published after the Second World War in the year 1949, was a biography of Katsushika Hokusai, probably the most famous Japanese painter in the West, whose work was a major influence on the impressionist movement in Europe. With this book, simply called *Hokusai*, Hloucha introduced his life and work to the Czechoslovak readers. [35] The first book published after his second trip to Japan, *Fairy Tales of Japanese Children*(1926), was dedicated to the youngest brother of the Emperor, prince Sumi no Miya. This act was rewarded by an official letter of thanks from the Emperor's office and Japanese newspaper gave it some attention as well at the time.[36]

The first great presentation of Hloucha's collections to the public was the Exhibition of Non-European Art, which took place in today's Trade Fair Palace in November 1929, where objects from Japan and China created the largest section. Visitors could admire over

[33] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 161.
[34] Šmejkal (note 8), p. 73.
[35] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), pp. 157–159.
[36] Šmejkal (note 8), p. 93.

thousand art pieces not only from Eastern Asia, but also from the African continent, Oceania, Southern Asia and even pieces from pre-Columbine Americas. The exhibition gained very good reviews in the press, but a larger number of attendees was expected. Other exhibitions were organized in the later years, although none of them on such big scale. The last major presentation of Hloucha's collection took place in the year 1943 in the Museum of Applied Art in Prague, where objects from various private collectors, as well as Náprstek Museum, were on display.[37]

Hloucha decided to sell pieces from his collection at an international arts auction in Berlin in 1931, but the sales were quite bad due to economic crisis and the objects he managed to auction were sold under their real price.[38] Hloucha planned to travel to Japan again, but as the economic situation was not favourable and in a few years the world would be caught up amidst yet another war, he never managed to return there. Instead, he became a specialist on non-European art and even became a member of the purchasing committee of National Gallery's oriental department. He also helped with acquisitions and further classification of items in Náprstek Museum. In the early 1930s, Joe Hloucha also began long and tedious negotiations that finally resulted in Náprstek Museum's acquisition of a large part of his collections in 1943. Twelve years later, in 1955, a contract was signed, upon which most of Hloucha's collection, which counted around 8 790 objects, became state property and he would be paid a monthly sum until his death. The deal was such that the collector would still look after the objects and help to catalogue them, which he did diligently, but only for two years, since he died after a short illness in the year 1957.[39] Nowadays, parts of Hloucha's collection can be found outside of Náprstek Museum. For example, some 1 000 japanese woodblock prints became a part of the Collection of Asian Art of the National Gallery Prague.

Joe Hloucha did not take part in academic work and yet he influenced the field of Japanese studies in Czechoslovakia. His books are listed among the entry-level readings at these departments even nowadays and we can only imagine the impact they had in the time that the first department of Japanese studies was funded at Charles University in Prague

[37] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), pp. 162–163.
[38] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 162.
[39] Kraemerová – Šejbl (note 1), p. 153.

in 1947. They offer various information on culture, society and history, as well as Japanese language, but they have to be taken with a grain of salt, since Hloucha liked to make his writings more colourful than they sometimes were. The collections, that this country was lucky enough to obtain into its possession, are vast and hard to compete with, even on European scale. To compare, in Krakow, Poland, there is the Manggha museum that was built for the polish collection of Japanese art that is maybe third of the size of the collections in Náprstek museum. The museum was even visited by the Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and is a well-known centre of Japanese culture. Meanwhile, Náprstek's Japanese collections are waiting to be given the proper attention and spotlight. Considering that some of the pieces in the collections cannot be found in their country of origin anymore, since they were considered applied arts and lost to time, hopefully, more researchers will dive into their rich depths and put them into artistic and historical context in the future.

2. THE HISTORY OF *NETSUKE*

In the following chapter we will dive into the colourful history netsuke, their origin and development, their golden age, as well as their demise in Japanese culture and how they became eagerly sought-after objects in the eyes of foreigners visiting Japan when the country opened its borders after three hundred years of the *sakoku* period, while losing its reputation among the nation.

Since early 20th century, we would not find the biggest collections of these objects in Japan, but in the museums and private collections of the West. Until this day, there exists only a handful of books, most of which offer the readers only a general overview of the styles, that focus on *netsuke*. What used to be artefacts of everyday use and, in many cases, of great artistic value, quickly became almost forgotten memories of the Land of the Rising sun of the past.

One of the few books, and definitely amongst the most influential ones, written by a Japanese author that focuses on netsuke and that is *The Netuske Handbook of Ueda Reikichi*, first published in 1961. The author himself brings this baffling absence of works that would be devoted to a part of Japanese cultural heritage to the readers' attention and laments it. The few publications that existed in Japan throughout history served more like books of designs for other carvers, sometimes, they were actually only small sections in books otherwise focused on *tsubas,* or sword guards on Japanese *katanas*[40] Reikichi realized that no comprehensive books on the subject were written and decided to deal with this problem himself. His work was adapted into English by another of the few authors who devoted their time to the miniature sculptures, Raymond Bushell, and it is thanks to him that Western readers have at least some work that dives into the subject more deeply than others. As was already mentioned, Albert Brockhaus' *Netsuke*, published in 1909 in Leipzig, was the first Western publication on the topic, so we can understand the level of Reikichi's frustration. Since the seventies, the literary and academic world had not seen any major works that would bring the art of *20nró* and *netsuke* to the attention of public. Most of the newly written publications that were published in the last fifty years are auction catalogues, usually with rather short written sections that serve more as an introduction to the subject.

[40] Ueda Reikichi, *The Netsuke Handbook of Ueda Reikichi*, 7th printing, Tokyo 1971, pp. 201–202.

In the current times, the topic of *netsuke* remains the subject of interest mainly to private collectors, who founded their own International Netsuke Society in 1975. It should be noted that one historical novel, *The Hare With the Amber Eyes*(2010), deals with *netsuke* and helped to raise some awareness about the topic.

Even though Western museums, including Náprstek Museum in Prague, possess rather big collections, bigger than the ones in Japan, only a handful of objects, if any, can be found on display and not much information on the nature of them is usually offered to the visitors. It is interesting, because *netsuke* were a part of everyday life in Japan for several hundred years and they offer a deep source of research material. While earlier artistic netsuke were influenced by Chinese art, those from the golden age of this miniature sculpture craft represent the best of what Japanese artists were capable of, skill-wise. There is no other country that would develop such level of miniature carving like Japan with its *netsuke* and thanks to the minimum of foreign influence during the *sakoku* period, these objects could become to represent the native artistic tradition of Japan.[41]

2.1 EARLY HISTORY

Traditional Japanese clothing lacks pockets, as was mentioned before. The solution to this problem varied, based on the social status and gender of the person. Women would carry small objects in their wide sleeves and those belonging to samurai class, and hence being allowed to carry swords, would hang small objects from the sword handles. Members of other classes began to suspend their *sagemono*, hanging items, from the *obi* sash of their *kimono*. Something was needed to stop these objects from slipping and *netsuke* came to use.[42]

The first mention of the tradition attaching objects to the hilt of a sword can be already found in *Kojiki*, which is the oldest preserved literary work of Japan written in early 8th century.[43] But the earliest record of *netsuke* comes only from the 17th century. We can assume that they had small to no artistic value until that time. Before they became objects of art, they were small pieces of wood, shells and other things that one would find in nature around. Even the Japanese characters that make up the word *netsuke* mean 'root' and 'to attach'

[41] Reikichi (note 39), p. 25.
[42] Richard Barker – Lawrence Smith, *Netsuke: The Miniature Sculpture of Japan*, London 1976, p. 9.
[43] Raymond Bushell, *An Introduction to Netsuke*, 7th printing, Japan 1987, p. 14.

in their direct translation and thus carry this piece of history in the modern days. Smaller gourds were used as *netsuke* the most, since their round and smooth shape made them the perfect candidate and the technique to alter their growth to meet various needs, for example to serve as a bottle, has a long tradition in Japan.[44] Opinions on the time period of the first use of *netsuke* differ, some pushing it as far back as 12th century, while others place them in the late 16th or early 17th century. We have no way of knowing where the truth lies, because the early ones were objects of utility and held no artistic value that would be worthy of mention in history texts. We can be sure of their use only thanks to records regarding the objects they held in place on the sashes. [45]

Inrō were only one of the many types of things that one could hang from their belt. During the Fujiwara era, travellers would carry flint bags for building fires on the road and during Kamakura period, they would start holding money and medicine as well. These small bags are what *inrō* sprung from during the Tokugawa period. [46] They were decorated in simple black lacquer and by the last quarter of 17th century a golden and silver lacquer became popular in use as well. As luxurious pouches and *inrō* became more popular, so did artistic *netsuke*. Lacquer artists who made *inrō* would also be the ones who made the accompanying *netsuke* in many cases as well. It is important to mention that *inrō* were reserved for the samurai class, which meant that with their demand came the promise of well-paid work for the artist. This also might be the reason why we have so few of these lacquered objects coming from the 16th century, because even among samurai they were not a universally used accessory.[47]

The earliest artistic *netsuke* were quite large, with length up to 15 centimetres, while those produced in later periods would usually be around 4 centimetres in height. These objects were carved in a style that was strongly influenced by Chinese art that was very popular during that time thanks to the international relations that Japan was keeping with the mainland. [48] This influence was strongly felt especially among scholars, since many Chinese priests visited Japan and taught there. Through them, Chinese literature, legends and history became widely

[44] Bushell (note 42), p. 15.
[45] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 58–61.
[46] Reikichi (note 39), p. 59.
[47] Bushell (note 42), p. 16.
[48] Ibidem.

spread and popular and influenced artistic practice in Japan as well. Quite a number of tales and legends took roots among the people and were Japanized over time, becoming a part of Japanese heritage themselves. [49]

Early *netsuke* were not only carved following the Chinese tradition, small objects brought from the country were used in their original form as well, with only small alterations like the addition of holes to pass the cord through. Anything that was small enough and had no sharp edges could serve as a *netsuke*, sword handles, cane heads, dress ornaments, pendants or personal seals, which became quite popular. Especially favoured design was the *shishi* lion-dog, which spread from China across all of East Asia.[50] They were said to have strong protective powers and their image would be used in stone statues guarding the entrances to temples, households, or tombs. Smaller *shishi* lion-dogs could be seen being used in door knocker designs, pottery and, as mentioned, personal seals.[51] Another influence of Chinese carving style should be mentioned and that is the lack of signatures. Works were rarely signed or marked in any way by the author.[52] It was a time before carvers and art collectors began to care more about famous names instead of quality of the works. The reason why signatures were so scarce even in later time might have been purely functional. Netsuke's designs had to work from all sides, since the pieces were in constant movement and were not meant to idly sit on a shelf.[53] As they were meant to be worn and their purely artistic value was appreciated much later through foreign collectors, there was no need to mark them. The ownership only rarely changed and netsuke would usually travel from the carver's shop straight to those who ordered them in the first place.

During this time, Buddhist carving was in decline and the sculptors became interested in netsuke as a hobby, but they were more concerned with the design of their work, rather than the technique of their carving, which was only beginning to develop. The influence of haiku poetry was also apparent, through the shared themes of the seasons changing, harmony, natural motifs and overall subtlety and delicacy.[54]

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[49] Reikichi (note 39), p. 169.
[50] Reikichi (note 39), p. 62.
[51] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 15.
[52] Raymond Bushell, *The Wonderful World of Netsuke*, 2nd printing, Japan 1969, p. 18.
[53] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 15.
[54] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 169–170.

2.2 TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE

Significant growth in *netsuke* production came with the Tokugawa shogunate and the period of closed borders, known as *sakoku*. After the Battle of Sekigahara in October 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu seized the power in Japan and moved the centre of government to Edo, known in modern times as Tokyo.[55] While Kyoto remained the home of the Emperors and cultural life still flourished there, Edo quickly became a buzzing centre of business and newer forms of art, with *netsuke* among them.[56]

Tokugawa shogunate successfully ended a long period of civil wars and skirmishes over power. No longer ravaged by almost constant fighting, the country stabilised and began to greatly proper economically. This led to a period of rapid urbanization, increased production in agriculture and industry and the overall growth of the quality of life, which affected all social classes. More luxurious goods were soon within the reach of even the lower classes which suffered during the wars the most. Feudal society of this period was strictly divided into four classes, with nobility above them. These were the samurai, farmers, artisans and merchants, who fell on the very bottom.[57] Because merchants were dealing with money and not doing 'honest' work, their reputation was that of parasites to society. People were expected to live a lifestyle befitting their social status and feudal lords, together with their samurai, had to periodically prove that they were not gathering too many riches.[58]

Japan entered the period that is today known as *sakoku* in 1639. Borders were closed off to foreigners, with a small exception of Chinese, Korean and Dutch merchants that could do business in a couple of designated areas, mostly in the area of Nagasaki. Reasons for this decision were more complex, but essentially it came down to securing and protecting the power of the Tokugawa shogunate. With Japanese citizens forbidden to leave the country, there was little chance of any of the potential rivals of the Tokugawa clan forming any alliances overseas. A big role played the rapid spread of Christianity around Eastern Asia as well.[59] Tokugawa shogunate was afraid that the teachings of foreign missionaries would eventually

[55] Reischauer – Craig (note 2), p. 81.
[56] Barker – Smith (note 41), pp. 9–10.
[57] Reischauer – Craig (note 2), pp. 89–90.
[58] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 10.
[59] Reischauer – Craig (note 2), pp. 90–92.

pose a threat to its power over the country and set on a path to eradicate the new religion. The fact that most of the missionaries came from Portugal and Spain, countries that were rapidly conquering or slaughtering any non-Christian nation that they met along the way during these times, played a significant role as well.[60]

During the *sakoku* period, the art world in Japan could flourish without any foreign influence. With the economic stability that the country was experiencing, the number of native techniques and styles rose, especially in metalwork, lacquer and woodblock printing. The first two led to more refined *inrō* production, which went hand in hand with *netsuke*.[61] But as was said before, *inrō* were reserved for the samurai class. While they stood on the top of the social hierarchy, over time their power declined, while the merchant class that was officially on the very bottom gathered riches and after some time, were actually wealthier than some from the top of the society. Operating a rapidly growing businesses, while not being allowed to put their wealth on display and being forced to a humble lifestyle befitting their social status meant that merchants had to find subtle ways to let others known of their financial success. Among them was carrying a tobacco pouch.[62]

2.3 *NETSUKE* AND TOBACCO POUCH

Tobacco was introduced in Japan by the end of 16th century and as an imported commodity, it was quite expensive. Soon, it became wildly cultivated and became an inseparable part of any business meeting. The host was obliged to offer tobacco to their guests, but soon smokers started carrying it around in small pouches, first in their wallets or coin purses, but soon they evolved into an original type of accessory, which quickly became the sign of the financial status of their owners. They also became a popular type of travel souvenirs, for example from pilgrimage to the Ise shrine, which is the most important *Shinto* shrine, for it is dedicated to the sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami. Since tobacco pouches were small, they were the perfect articles to demonstrate their wealth on for merchants and because they were worn attached to the belts or the *obi* sashes, they needed a *netsuke.* Different pouches were for different occasions and their designs varied greatly.

[60] Barker – Smith (note 41), pp. 14–15.
[61] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 15.
[62] Reischauer – Craig (note 2), pp. 104–106.

Semi-precious stones and luxurious materials were made into *ojime* beads and *netsuke* had to compliment the overall design. Carvers had to keep up with the demand and started making two classes of them, one of them quickly produced for wholesalers and the other one finely designed and skilfully executed to reflect the wealth and specific order of the customer.[63] Commercial carvers would use moulds to cast *netsuke* faster and would often use inferior materials, like waste ivory from *shamisen* makers, who used it to make the plectrums for the instrument. To use as much of the ivory as possible, they would often accommodate the design of the *netsuke* to the triangular shape of the waste ivory.[64]

Successful businessmen spared no expense. As the samurai class took pride in luxurious swords, wealthy merchants had tobacco pouches to show off in the streets. With the rapidly growing demand, this trend quickly spread to other wealthy citizens, artists and playboys, we can finally talk about *netsuke* production as an industry. More and more artists, painters, carvers, metalworkers and lacquerers made *netsuke* as a hobby and many of them moved onto their production exclusively. This lead to overall increase of the quality of the objects, as the artists making them were already quite skilled in their craft and began focusing on much more detailed work and how to perfect it.[65]

2.4 GENROKU PERIOD AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF *NETSUKE*

Culture was flourishing, especially throughout the Genroku period (1688–1704) and the merchant class was the key to this rapid development. Cities expanded and townsmen who were suddenly doing better than ever before were in search of leisure. Wealthy businessmen, who were in many ways much more free than the samurai, would become patrons of arts, as that was socially acceptable way for them to show-off their riches. There was an important shift happening in society, suddenly the common townsfolk wanted to be entertained and have nicer things as well. Literacy amongst townsfolk was quite high by that time and publishing business was flourishing. Whole quarters of towns were dedicated to passing the time, filled with restaurants, bars, public houses and theatres. *Kabuki* and *bunraku* theatre rose and developed into high artistic forms, as well as *ukio-e*

[63] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 68–72.
[64] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 124–125.
[65] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 62–63.

in woodblock printing and haiku in poetry. All of these, either directly, or indirectly, influenced the aesthetics of *netsuke* production of that time. The main inspiration to these art forms was the everyday life and the beauty of the nature around. Scenes of daily life, children playing games and merchants in the streets, those were all as interesting to artists as famous legends about heroes of the past[66].

The first half of the 19th century was the period of major production of high quality *netsuke.* They became smaller and rounder in their form and less scholarly and more humorous and satirical in their subjects, which grew to cover much wider range of topics. Their form reached incredible levels of technical skills and the finest of their kind could take several months to finish. Of course, such pieces were quite expensive and they reflected the dedication, skill and perfectionism characteristic for the best of Japanese craftsmen.[67] A big influence was the love of nature and the changing seasons, as they were sentimental, yet delicate and through the popularity of haiku poems, they were in great demand by many different social classes. Apart from nature scenes, animal subjects were incredibly popular, since the shape and form of their bodies was perfect for the roundness demanded by the nature of *netsuke*. Artists began to favour simplicity of the treatment of their works, which led to carvings that feel light and fresh and which elevated the art form further. [68]

During these times, many artists sought fame and fortune around the capital city of Edo. The city, buzzing with life, business and culture, served as an endless well of inspiration for arts. The merchant social class, which benefited greatly from the country's economic growth, could afford to financially support local *kabuki* theatres, geishas and courtesans from the red-light districts, all of which played essential role in the birth of the *ukiyo-e* genre of Japanese art. Scenes from 'the floating world' resonated with the whole art world, *inrō* and *netsuke* included.[69] Given the erotic nature of many of the *ukiyo-e* pieces, carvers needed to find a way to keep the *netsuke* socially acceptable even in the presence of women and children and thanks to that, mechanical pieces that would appear to be a skilfully done

[66] Reischauer – Craig (note 2), pp. 104–113.
[67] Barker – Smith (note 41), pp. 16–17.
[68] Bushell (note 42), p. 18.
[69] Bushell (note 42), p. 19.

nut or a flower bud, would reveal a detailed erotic, yet still tasteful, scene upon pressing a hidden button, or pulling a moving part.

It was quite common during these times for master mask carvers to produce *netsuke* versions of their creations. As tobacco smoking and wearing a pouch of it on a person was at the height of its popularity, many skilled sculptors dedicated themselves to carving *netsuke*. The demand was so big, that many potters, lacquerers and metalworkers began to produce them on the side. As customers were getting wealthier, artists needed to accommodate to their developing taste for unusual and fine materials.[70]

2.5 THE FALL OF SHOGUNATE AND *SAKOKU* PERIOD

The 1850s were quite turbulent times for Japan. Commodore Perry arrived to the shores of the island country in 1853 and, backed up by a fleet of gunboats, managed to seal the deal with the Tokugawa shogunate that resulted in Japan opening up its borders to foreign trade and travellers and ending the *sakoku* period with the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate and the restoration of the powers of the Emperor Meiji in 1868.[71] Western goods, thoughts, fashion and science, among other things, flooded the country. The centuries-developing taste in art was suddenly paralyzed and overwhelmed with new stimuli. Suddenly, there was a lack of confidence in native values and aesthetics. It was no longer fashionable to wear *kimonos*, instead, men would suddenly start wearing Western suits, traditional hairstyles were cut and hidden away under Western-style hats. But the thirst for foreign knowledge, art and lifestyle went both ways and so Japanese art that was suffering from a sudden lack of demand and appreciation found its new admirers in the travellers and collectors from the West. Unfortunately, as the artists were desperate for making their living, this resulted in an influx of poor-quality pieces and even destruction of larger objects for the sake of selling a small part to foreigners, often incredibly undervalued.[72]

In 1854, a large earthquake struck the Ansei area and tens of thousands of people lost their lives in the capital city of Edo, not only during the natural catastrophe, but in the widespread fires that followed. Apart from human lives, numerous artworks in the area were destroyed as well, including *netsuke*. The demand for replacements

[70] Ibidem.
[71] Reischauer – Craig (note 2), pp. 122–136.
[72] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 17.

was bigger than the artists, affected by the earthquake themselves, could keep up with. Depleted supplies of high-quality materials also played their role and so in the times following this disaster, there was a flood of poor quality *netsuke* on the market.[73]

At the end of Tokugawa period, the popularity of *netsuke* began to decline. In the case of tobacco smoking, they were slowly replaced by pipe cases that fulfilled the role of *netsuke* as well, and later on, after the end of *sakoku* period and opening up the country as the aftermath of the Meiji restoration, the Western custom of cigarette smoking replaced the need for pipes and tobacco pouches altogether. Traditional Japanese clothes were slowly being replaced by Western ones and thus the need for *inrō* disappeared as well. Appreciation of Japanese arts also fell from grace. The demand was still there, though, but created by art collectors and travellers, which severed the connection of the art objects and their actual use. Samurai class was abolished shortly after the establishment of Western-type army and wearing swords in public became illegal in the year 1876 and so even *katanas* became mere objects of art.[74]

2.6 MEIJI PERIOD AND THE WESTERN MARKET

While *netsuke* fell out of fashion in their country of origin, they became an important export article among foreigners and abroad, they became an art form characteristic for Japan. It all began during Commodore Perry's mission to make Japan open up its borders to foreigners, namely Americans, since Japan would become an important stop for steamboats to refill coal on their trips to East Asia. During one of the meetings that would eventually lead to the Meiji restoration, one of Perry's companions caught a glimpse of a mask *netsuke* of one of the Japanese and immediately got fascinated by the object. It was the head porter of the shogunate, Mikawaya Kozaburo who wore it and who traded it with Perry's companion. As doing business with foreigners was still illegal at that time, Kozaburo went to prison, but was released soon after. He was approached by the Americans to obtain more *netsuke* for them and was given the funds to do so and thus, international trade with Japanese art was born, with *netsuke* being among the very first articles exported. Kozaburo later opened

[73] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 170–172.
[74] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 164–165.

up an art shop specializing in tobacco pouches and also established a trading company, called Sanko Shokai, that specialized in exporting Japanese art overseas.[75]

Netsuke made for export were mostly made in larger cities like Osaka or Tokyo and carvers soon became better known abroad than in their own country. Japanese sculpture came into a new era. The preferred material was mostly ivory and not only for *netsuke*, for which it was commonly used before the Meiji revolution, but for *okimono*[76] as well. Since the primary function of *netsuke* was no longer of much importance to foreign collectors and they would put them on display in the same way as *okimono*, many artists would copy *netsuke* designs in larger objects, sans the cord holes. Basically, *netsuke* became the standard for ivory carvings and would often serve as the model.[77] These carved works that were produced after the Meiji restoration, were influenced by Western artistic ideas, to some extent. Western naturalism was amongst the strongest of influences, not only in Japanese miniature sculpture, but in all forms of art, especially literature.[78]

With the foundation of Tokyo Art Academy in 1887, the traditional way of artistic training, which relied on the relationship between a master and an apprentice, was quickly discarded. Instead, an individualistic and independent approach was taken. There were no classes on miniature carvings, even though the first sculpture professor was a *netsuke* carver himself and the fame and popularity of the art form slowly, but surely, disappeared from the focus of Japanese sculptors. The objects became collector's items and the artists still making them were split into two groups. The first one were artists who studied and developed in the traditional way and the second one were carvers who went to study in the newly established art schools that taught their students following the Western university tradition. There was one last glimmer of master artistry in the late-period *netsuke* carving. The fact that they no longer had to be bound by the limitations set by their everyday use, their designs could be more elaborate. Another reason, apart from showcasing their skill, was that the more complicated the carving was, the bigger profit it could bring to the artist. Old designs were revisited and many of them copied, but with greater detail that would be

[75] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 166–168.
[76] Decorative objects of art, often similar size as *netsuke*.
[77] Reikichi (note 39), p. 172.
[78] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 17.

formerly abandoned. Although *netsuke* are still being carved, both in Japan and abroad, it is quite sporadically and mostly for collecting purposes.[79]

Netsuke and *okimono*, in their decorative sense, are still present, to some extent. During the second half of 20th century, when Japanese manga and anime spread outside of the country and the base of fans kept growing rapidly, a lot of merchandise circled back to what people were already familiar with. Nowadays, we can come across seemingly endless market of 'toys' which are based on a certain type of media, may it be a video game, manga comics or an anime show. Even though these pieces are no longer hand-carved out of wood or ivory, nor cast in metal, but instead they are made out of plastic, their decorative purpose is still strong and they still share certain features that come with the objects' function. What were once *netsuke* with a purpose of holding a *sagemono*, developed into phone charms and keychains. Throughout Japan, we can come across *gacha* games, which works on the same principle as a gumball machine, but instead of a piece of candy, a small *okimono* falls out. To some extent, these modern-day *netsuke* and *okimono* help to connect people who might find out, through these small decorative items, that they share an interest. Mostly, their function is purely decorative, bringing joy to their owner.

[79] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 172–174.

3. WHAT MAKES A *NETSUKE*

Miniature art has been an important part of Japanese culture since ancient times and it is well-known around the world as well. Bonsai trees, painstakingly cared for throughout generations, tray landscapes, woodblock prints, or sword fittings known as *tsuba*, those are all art forms that are among the first that art historians, as well as laics, would offer as examples of the best among Japanese art. But as far as miniature sculpture in Japan goes, *netsuke* is quite special and that is because its primary function was not to be put on display and admired from a distance, it was meant to be worn. Originally, they were articles of utility, but even the most common objects bear artistic potential in the eyes of Japanese artists and so they were slowly, but surely, through shaping, carving and decorating, elevated into a true art form and eventually became objects of wealth and vanity.[80]

As an art form, most *netsuke* have no proper function outside of its unit of *inrō, netsuke* and *ojime,* alternatively a unit that substitutes *inrō* with a different object, like the tobacco pouch. Compared to *okimono,* which are created with the intention of serving as a decorative 'placed' object, *netsuke* are usually examined from all sides. This means that artists had to take into account rather rigid limitations when designing and carving *netsuke*. First, there is the shape. *Netsuke* have to be free of any potential appendages, since those might get caught in the fabric and potentially tear the clothes, or get damaged themselves. For this purpose, they should be round and smooth and they must be strong and sturdy and not too fragile, to withstand the wear of everyday life. Then, their shape had to be pleasant to wear to the owner and not bothersome or distracting in any way. On top of that, in each design the artist had to think of an effective way of attaching the cord to the *netsuke*. They had to take into account that the design had to work from all sides, bottom included, as it was expected to be handled and turned around.[81] To fulfil its function to suspend a hanging object from the *obi* sash, it needed holes to pass the cord through. These had to be positioned in such places as to allow the *netsuke* to hang naturally and preferably show its best side, without marring the overall design in any way.[82] Sometimes, they would not cut them into the sculpture, but use natural shapes and spaces between parts of their designs to pass the cord through. Depending on the chosen material,

[80] Raymond Bushell, *The Wonderful World of Netsuke*, 2nd printing, Japan 1969, p. 11.
[81] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 159–160.
[82] Bushell (note 42), p. 11.

artists also had to think of inlaying the holes with something more suitable to come into contact with the cord, so for example wood would usually have small inlay parts of ivory in the holes. As many of the *netsuke* were meant to be paired with a delicate lacquer *inrō*, they had to be light and smooth as not to damage them. In these cases, materials like metal or ceramics were unsuitable and wood and ivory were preferred.[83]

Even though there is a lot of seemingly hard obstacles to overcome when carving a *netsuke*, the art form was as free as could be at that time. Artists were bound by no tradition or style, no demands of supervisors or sponsors, they had no loss of patronage to fear, as they were operating on the artistic periphery. The carvers had no royal stipend or sponsorships like the academic or court artists at that time and thus had full artistic freedom in what they chose to create.[84] With that came the unfortunate fact that compared to, for example, painters, they lived in relative poverty. Successful painters would often be granted some small land tenure by a daimyo and were paid graciously, but with these advantages came also the risk of falling from grace and losing them. *Netsuke* artists mostly experienced no such treatment, but being free of financial and social restraints and obligations led to the seemingly endless variety of *netsuke* being created.[85]

Netsuke were usually carved from one single block of material. While it would have been easier to make them from more separate parts, the object would be much more susceptible to being damaged by everyday use and for pieces to break off. Unless the purpose was to enhance the design, inlay and mosaic were generally avoided, as well as addition of colour. Usually, different type of material was used for the eyes of animals and human figures, which made them seemingly alive.[86] Various techniques of the sculptor's craft were used and brought to artistic perfection over time. Throughout the centuries, there were *netsuke* that were technical wonders in the eyes of the audience back in the time of their production, as well as nowadays. Some of the popular designs that showed the true skill of the carvers were for example those in the shape of a beehive or lotus pods, which included parts that were loose, yet not removable and that made rattling sounds similar to those from real-life nature. This shows the level of detail that went into these miniature carvings.

[83] Reikichi (note 39), p. 160.
[84] Bushell (note 42), p. 11.
[85] Reikichi (note 39), p. 161.
[86] Ibidem.

The mechanics behind such pieces were carefully guarded and eventually lost to time. As was previously mentioned, there were for example 'trick' *netsuke* that would depict seemingly common designs like a nut of a tree, but that would reveal an erotic scene upon pressing or pulling a movable part.[87]

But one of the most appealing and prized qualities of *netsuke* was out of the hands of the artists and that was *aji*, or flavour. Without it, the object is incomplete, we could say that it lacks something like a soul. *Aji* is brought upon the *netsuke* throughout years of handling and wearing the object, which smooths the shapes and polishes it in such a way that cannot be reproduced in artist's workshop. Certain materials are much better suited in terms of long-term use and gaining a lovely natural patina. Natural polished wood and ivory were favoured for these properties and developed their *aji* over years of rubbing against their wearer's clothing.[88]

[87] Reikichi (note 39), p. 161.
[88] Bushell (note 51), p. 12.

4. TYPES OF *NETSUKE*

4.1 *KATABORI NETSUKE*

The most common type of *netsuke* is *katabori netsuke*. This group essentially includes all three dimensional statue-like carvings. There is a wide range of them, both in size and subjects. These can be anywhere from 2,5 to 15 centimetres long. Smaller pieces would be far too miniscule to fulfil their function and bigger ones would be too heavy and impractical, so we can see that limitations to their production was given by their use and function. In this group, we can also find the largest number of examples of pieces where holes for the cord to pass through is be formed by natural elements in the design itself, rather than having extra holes carved through the whole object. [89] As for designs, *katabori netsuke* would mostly depict humans, deities, animals or groups of any of these combined.[90]

4.2 *MANJU NETSUKE*

Then, there are *manju netsuke*, which got their name after their physical resemblance to a round rice cake, popular across the country. For their shape, which made them easy to produce and pleasant to wear, they were very common throughout the years. These are mostly round and flat, to sit comfortably against the *obi* sash, but sometimes they appeared in square or oval variations. We can distinguish two different types of *manju netsuke*, one of them is made of one solid piece, with decorated surface, and the other made out of two sections that were later fitted together.[91] They were mostly made from wood, ivory, or lacquer and were usually engraved, inlaid or had a carved semi-relief. The cord was usually attached to the inner ring and hence the design had no need for carving of extra holes, or it was tied to a metal ring that was fixed on the side of the *netsuke.*[92]

Another variety of *manju netsuke* are called *ryusa*, after the name of the first artist who began producing them in Edo. They have the basic shape of the *manju*, but they are made by cutting and perforating the chosen material, creating a very light and almost lace-like design that

[89] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 18.
[90] Reikichi (note 39), p. 56.
[91] Ibidem.
[92] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 18.

can be appreciated especially when light passes through it. Their subject usually drew inspiration from nature, mostly flowers and birds, or they depicted various types of arabesques.[93]

4.3 *KAGAMIBUTA NETSUKE*

Next, we have *kagamibuta netsuke*, also known as *kanabuta netsuke* in the area of Kyoto and Osaka. These are bowl-shaped, essentially with the base of a *manju netsuke*, with a lid made of various metal alloys. The base was usually carved from bone, ivory or horn and mostly, the design relied on the lid, while we can occasionally find bowls that are skilfully carved as well. The metal plates were usually produced my metal artists who specialized on sword *tsubas*.[94] When *katanas* were banned from being carried openly in public in the year 1876,[95] metal artists essentially went out of work and many of them re-oriented their artistic focus on producing *kagamibuta netsukes*, which became quite popular around the Tokyo area in the late 19th century. Commonly used techniques used on the lids were relief, etching or inlay, when the design called for it. This type of *netsuke* needed no holes drilled to pass the cord through, instead, it was passed between the two parts.[96]

4.4 *MEN NETSUKE*

In the capital city of Edo, one of the more popular types were directly connected to another art form and that was theatre. *Men,* literally meaning 'mask', *netsuke* were mostly produced in the same art studios as their larger siblings. They varied from Buddhist *gigaku* and *bugaku* masks that were used in ancient dances that were brought to Japan during the Asuka period, to masks that were known from *noh* theatre plays or different popular folk characters whose masks people would buy and wear at summer festivals, while others were designed by the artists themselves.[97]

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[93] Reikichi (note 39), p. 56.
[94] Ibidem.
[95] Reischauer – Craig (note 2), p. 143.
[96] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 18.
[97] Ibidem.

4.5 *SASHI NETSUKE*

Another interesting type that should be mentioned are *sashi netsuke*. These are as long as the width of the *obi* sash, usually between 12 to 16 centimetres, and have an elongated shape with the cord holes drilled at their bottom and they were worn thrust between the *obi* sash and the clothing. Usually, the top, which is actually visible, is the most decorated. These can be assumed to have evolved from decorated dagger handles, to which a bag with a flint was tied. This type is not as common as the ones mentioned beforehand, but they should be kept in mind.[98]

4.6 OTHER TYPES OF *NETSUKE*

More types and smaller groups of *netsuke* can be distinguished, for example *anabori netsuke*, which are hollowed and usually have the shape of a clam with an incredibly detailed scenery carved inside of it. Others were named after the material, design, or other various characteristics, but essentially, they can be put into one of the categories mentioned above. A large group was created by things found in nature that were polished and a cord was attached to them, as was the history of development of this art form, but these were not collected, nor recorded.[99]

4.7 *NETSUKE* WITH SECONDARY FUNCTION

A lot of people would also carry objects of their everyday use that might have been, for example, tied to their profession. These were so-called *netsuke* with secondary functions. It was already mentioned that *inrō* were marks of the samurai. These were quite delicate and fragile and the person wearing them would not like to damage them by a *netsuke* that was too big, bulky or heavy. But there were other things, like the aforementioned tobacco pouches, that men needed to carry on their persons, that were not as susceptible to damage and allowed for wider spectrum of utility when it came to the counterweights keeping them in place. One of the widely used ones were ashtray *netsuke.* These were often designed to complement the tobacco pouch that they kept in place. They were heavily popular

[98] Reikichi (note 39), p. 56.
[99] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 18.

with farmers, since their profession would often call them away from the comfort of their homes where the ash from their pipes could be easily be disposed of without the danger of causing fire. These small ashtrays were usually made of cast metal and their shapes would vary from basic pots with lids to those reminiscing turtle shells or taking geometric shapes and arabesque motifs. Some of them were even made of cloisonné. Another kind that went hand in hand with the tobacco pouch were *netsuke* lighters. These would usually have a small button on the outside that would active a tiny hammer and a flint on the inside, which would set a small flame ablaze in a part that contained a kind of inflammable material. Lighters like these were typically made of metals like brass, iron or copper, but sometimes they were made in wood as well. Apart from lighters, *netsuke* that held matches appeared on the market as well.[100]

Mechanical clocks were introduced in Japan during the late 16th or early 17th century and watches were expensive and difficult to obtain for a long time. There was also the question of utility in the country, since Japan used the animals of their zodiac to divide the day into twelve two-hour-long periods and hence the clocks brought by Dutch merchants and Jesuit missionaries were more of a curiosity. Instead of mechanical clocks typical for European continent, fire and water clocks were widely used to tell the time, as well as sundials during the day. Sundial *netsuke* were often used, usually made of two or more sections, with one of them containing a compass as well.[101]

Hunters and fishermen would wear small folding knives or daggers as *netsuke,* while merchants would wear abacus as one, usually made of wood or ivory and only rarely made of metal. Another wider and quite popular section is tied to another Japanese art and that is the tea ceremony. Masters of this craft would wear special tea-whisks and other related suitable items as *netsuke* to suspend their whole sets of utensils for tea ceremonies. Doctors, for example, would wear Chinese medicinal figures, which were used by the patients to point to the part of their body that was troubling them. Social rules forbid doctors to touch women's bodies, for instance, and often they would not even be in the same space, but hidden behind a paper wall, and use the dolls to explain where the problem was. Sometimes, wealthy patients would send their servants to bring them

[100] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 64–66.
[101] Reikichi (note 39), p. 66.

medicine and the messenger would describe their master's condition via the small dolls.[102] The number of objects that could be used by other professions as *netsuke* was practically inexhaustible, but since they were originally objects of utility and not art and the craft itself, they were collected more as rarities. These could be items like personal seals, which were already mentioned, magnifying glasses, spyglasses, writing sets called *yatate*, cases for Japanese solid ink, etc. These might not have had much significance in the art world, but learning about their existence is still as important to understand the full extent of craftsmanship and variety that is tied with the existence and history of *netsuke*.[103]

[102] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 18.
[103] Reikichi (note 39), p. 67.

5. *NETSUKE* MATERIALS

Netsuke should not be too heavy to be comfortable to wear and for this reason, organic materials were usually preferred, with wood, ivory and lacquer the most important of them. While softwoods like cedar and boxwood were grown in Japan, many types of hardwoods were imported from China and South East Asia, which was a practice that came together with Buddhist sculpture. Other organic materials included horns, antlers, coral, amber and many more that will be mentioned later on in this chapter. Because of their weight, materials like ceramic, stones or metals were used less often and tended to be on the smaller side of the miniature sculptures. Certain materials used after the Meiji revolution were chosen simply because of their popularity among the foreigners from the West. Porcelain, for instance, was greatly valued among them, even though in its very fragile nature it is unsuitable for making *netsuke.* For example, small porcelain figure *netsukes* made in the *hirado* ware style, which was produced in today's Nagasaki prefecture, were produced during the second half of the 19th century to be sold to Western art market.[104]

5.1 WOOD

The variety of materials that could be used to make *netsuke* is almost endless, but wood was the most commonly used one, since it is widely available in the country and working with the material had a long history in the art world, for it was used in Buddhist carving. The material also offers a wide range of different colours, textures and grain to choose from. Japanese islands are a home to a wide selection of fine woods with qualities perfect for miniature *netsuke*. One of the best ones the country has to offer is *hinoki* cypress, nowadays widely cultivated around northern hemisphere for its timber, which is traditionally used for construction of shrines and temples around Japan and for Buddhist carvings. It was a natural choice for carving *netsuke*, but since the material is a bit too soft, details would be lost over time and the pieces would break from time to time, especially around the area where the cord was attached, which, of course, was not ideal and carvers searched for alternatives.[105]

[104] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 19.
[105] Reikichi (note 39), p. 73

The most suitable wood for *netsuke* carving turned out to be boxwood, called *tsuge* in Japanese. This tree is quite slow-growing and nowadays, most of this material is being imported into the country, but traditionally, it was grown in the south of Japan. One tree takes some thirty years to grow into the desired size and for this reason, as well as its natural oiliness, its wood is very strong and hard to break. Apart from *netsuke*, it was used to make hairbrushes or musical instruments and to carve seals. The material has a fine and even grain and lustrous, smooth patina that only improves with the *netsuke's* age and daily use.[106]

Next in preference were ebony, called *kokutan* in Japan, and sakura, or Japanese cherry, woods. These offered much better qualities compared to *hinoki* cypress, as they were less susceptible to damage. Kokutan ebony was prized for its density, strength and its dark colour, as well as the almost mirror-like finish it gained when polished. But since the trees are extremely slow-growing, it was considered very luxurious.[107] Another wood type that was commonly used and was easily grown was *madake,* a type of bamboo that was grown in Japan that was traditionally grown in Matsushima and which was used for carving seals as well as *netsuke*. Several parts of the plant could be used, starting from the bamboo root. The stem was the section that was usually used for carving, but due to the qualities of bamboo wood, it could also be split and woven into desired shape.[108]

Other types of wood that are known to have been used in *netsuke* production are black persimmon, camphor, jujube, pine, tea bush, yew, Zelkova, or *tsubaki*, which is Japanese camellia tree. Occasionally, fragrant woods like sandalwood, peach and apricot stones or various types of nuts were used. Most of the woods were simply carved and the natural colour and structure of the wood was enough for a skilled carver to create a beautiful piece of art, but from time to time, the material was coloured with paint or lacquer. To make the carvings feel more alive, or to draw out certain details, the material was occasionally inlaid with a different type, for example coral, malachite, ivory, or various types of shells.[109]

[106] Reikichi (note 39), p. 74.
[107] Ibidem.
[108] Reikichi (note 39), p. 77.
[109] Reikichi (note 39), p. 74.

5.2 IVORY

Ivory was the next choice of material after boxwood for most *netsuke* makers. Master carvers were conscious of their reputation and they chose only the best materials available. Since ivory was in great demand for the production of plectrums for *shamisen*, a market with the waste material from the places of production flourished. Most *netsuke* from such second-grade material conformed to the triangular shape, to use the ivory as much as possible. These were usually made for people with ordinary taste and are often of poor quality, but even among these there are pieces that are worthy of study and admiration.[110]

The best ivory for *netsuke* carving had to be the right size and have medium hardness for the artist to carve comfortably and to be responsive to their knife in the desired way. The material had to be moist and luscious with a smooth texture to gain the right *aji*, or flavour, with time and it had to be neither clayey nor crumbly for the piece to serve their owner for many years to come.[111] Such standards were usually met only in ivory from elephants in Thailand or Cambodia and throughout history it was imported to Japanese islands through China and Korea.[112] Poor quality ivory looks dry, has a dull colour and is scarred or pitted. If an ivory *netsuke* is heavily painted, tinted or stained in such way that the material is not visible, there is something suspicious about it and it might be either made of poor-quality material and damaged. For example, cracks in such material were sometimes filled with lacquer and the surface was heavily stained to hide any marks of repair.[113]

Marine ivory was a material that was easier to obtain in the island country where fishing industry has a long history, instead of having to import it from a faraway land. This type was not inferior in any way to its dryland variety, but it has a central nerve core that is quite large and artists had to work around this natural obstacle. Sometimes, patches of ivory or different materials were inserted to the hollow core. But this material was also sought after for a special quality that was not found in elephant ivory and that is a beautiful translucency, which offered artists wider opportunities to play with it in their designs. Types of marine ivory that were commonly used was narwhal horn, which has a lovely spiral grooving, walrus tusk

[110] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 74–75.
[111] Bushell (note 42), p. 21.
[112] Reikichi (note 39), p. 75.
[113] Bushell (note 42), pp. 21–22.

and whale tooth. Walrus ivory has a cellular or granulated mass that runs through its centre, but whale is mostly clean and unmarked, with occasional spots that can blemish the tooth. An incredibly rare type of ivory that could be found in *netsuke* production in the past comes from a helmeted hornbill, which is a bird species native to Sumatra, Borneo and Malaysia. This type of ivory was more prized than the true one, or even more prized than jade in China and for this reason, the helmeted hornbill was brought to the brink of extinction.[114]

5.3 HORN

The third material, that was among those used the most for *netsuke* production, was horn, mostly from deer or water buffalo. Occasionally, a horn from rhinoceros was used for carvings, but since the material had to be imported into the country, it was not easy to obtain. Even though staghorn, which was widely available throughout the country, was regarded as an inferior material by some, the reputation was not just. It might have been the many steps of preparation that the artist had to undertake, compared to for example imported ivory, rather than the qualities of the material itself. It is also worth mentioning, that compared to woodcarving, working with material like tusk and horn required a different type of technique and knifes, ones that had a thicker blade, which could also be the reason why woodcarvers stuck to their preferred material. The antler of the sacred deer of Nara, which was often used for carvings, has a hard outer shell with a dark spongy marrow that needed to be scraped away before artist began their work. The look of the final piece was also often dictated by the branch-like way the antlers grew, which some artists saw as limiting. Works from deer horn need to be observed with some level of caution though, since some carvers might have chosen to patch or plug hollow and porous parts of the antlers with a different type of material. But in the end, the material was harder than the more prized ivory and much more resistant to signs of wear.[115]

[114] Bushell (note 42), pp. 21–24.
[115] Bushell (note 42), p. 23.

5.4 METAL

For certain types of *netsuke*, like ashtrays or *kagamibuta*, metal was the material of choice. These were quite popular and in great demand, since they were hard to damage and their price was fairly cheap. This, of course, depended on the artist and the way they were produced, but for the mass production, metalworkers would cast *netsuke* in mould that could be used over and over again. High-quality artists would cast their pieces from wax, which meant that the design was truly one of a kind. Mainly, alloys of copper, for example *shakudo*, which combines copper and gold, or *shibuichi*, which is mixture of copper and silver. As was already mentioned, precious metals like gold and silver were thought to be able to speak for themselves in a clean form and not be overly decorated, so when they were used on their own in case of *netsuke* and *inrō*, it was usually for an *ojime* bead.[116] There is also a technique of weaving brass or copper wire into intricate designs that was commonly used, usually when creating an ashtray *netsuke*.[117]

5.5 LACQUER

Another material that needs to be mentioned is lacquer. It is unclear whether this technique was originally introduced from continental China, where it also has quite a long history, but nowadays it is one of the most admired technique connected with Japanese art. During Heian period, in 8th century, a decorative technique called *maki-e*, meaning 'sprinkled picture,' was invented and quickly became popular among artists and soon it was the dominant method used in lacquer decoration. This decorative technique, which was widely used in making *inrō*, uses sprinkled powders and fillings, usually gold and silver, to decorate the lacquer ware. The powder is applied either into a carved area, or directly on the lacquer, which is still damp during this step in the process. [118] Types of lacquer kinds and techniques that were commonly used in *inrō* and *netsuke* production are *tsuishu*, red lacquer, *tsuikoku*, black lacquer, *mage*, which uses twisted paper or wood that can be woven and later covered in lacquer, *kanshitsu*, technique where dry lacquer is carved, *negoro*, which combines red and black lacquers that are polished

[116] Bushell (note 42), p. 25.
[117] Reikichi (note 39), p. 76.
[118] *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, Tokyo 1993, p. 910.

in a way that forms a blotched pattern, and *kamakura-bori*, which uses carved wood onto which red or green lacquer is applied. Since lacquer was widely used in *inrō* production, it was only natural for the artists to design the accompanying *netsuke* as well, to make the designs of both of them harmonize.[119]

5.6 OTHER MATERIALS

Then, there were more precious materials like various types of corals, with black one, called *umimatsu* or sea pine in Japan, being the rarest. Not only was it hard to find a piece that would be dense and big enough to be used, it is very difficult to carve as well, since it is prone to split. This type of coral was mostly used in small pieces that were fitted into the eyes of *netsuke* figures, mostly animals, to bring life to the carving. Full coral carvings are extremely rare, since the material itself was very hard to harvest, with white one being the scarcest and red and pink the more common ones. Coral *netsuke* were mostly produced in late 19th and early 20th century and the material itself was perceived as being enough to be a prized piece, so artists rarely did more than shape and polish it. From time to time, mother of pearls could be used as well, often carved on one side only, since the material was hard to come by as well and it was admired without the need to embellish it further.[120]

The list of materials that are known to have been used in *netsuke* production could seemingly be endless. They could vary from materials that are native to Japanese isles to rare, imported ones. As artistically carved *netsuke* were the ones collected, many others that would have been of importance to today's researchers were lost in the course of time. For example, we know that hunters kept parts of their kill to use as sort of *netsuke* trophies. Tiger claws, wolf or fox jaws, pieces of vertebrae, anything with the desired shape and weight could have a cord tied to and serve its purpose as a piece of fashion accessory. Collections around the world are a home to a couple of these, though they were bought as rarities and their number is not very high. We know of other prized materials that were occasionally used for *netsuke* production, like fossil wood, amber, mother of pearls or silicified coal. And as centuries passed, people would keep coming back to materials that served as *netsuke* in the very beginnings of this art form like stones, seashells or gourds.[121]

[119] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 76–77.
[120] Bushell (note 42), pp. 24–25.
[121] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 77–78.

6. *NETSUKE* SUBJECTS

When *netsuke* developed from a purely functional objects into carved artworks, it was mentioned before that the very first trend was set by Chinese scholars. Firstly, objects imported from China, like *tsuba*, dress ornaments, seals, cane heads or pendants, were used in their original form, unaltered to the point that even the cord holes were not drilled, if possible. When artists began to carve *netsuke* in Japan, one of the first popular designs was the *shishi* lion-dog, which could have been seen in miniature form in seals, or in much grander statues at the gates to shrines and households.[122] As time passed, preference shifted from pure functionality of the object towards its beauty. Artists from various fields, like painters, metalworkers and woodcarvers, began making *netsuke* as a hobby, since the art form was not bound by rules and obligations like the rest of them and hence offered an outlet to their artistic visions and experimentation. Since financially sponsored artists, like most painters, had to conform to aesthetic preferences and styles of the families, which often meant that they could not focus their talents on anything new or unusual. But *netsuke* were worn by the lower classes of society and were very popular and thus they reflect not only the artistic expression, but also the essential character and taste of the society of the era of Tokugawa shogunate in general. Attention was dedicated to the design and subject of *netsuke*, which was considered its essence, rather than technique. According to Ueda Reikichi, subjects can be split into three main artistic levels, the first being reproduced realities, which was not very common. Realism never really took root in Japan and the reality depicted was always warped and changed to suit a desired mood or artistic style. Most works belong to the second level, which is imaginary reality, or an extension of the world around us. The third level incorporates more abstract works and impression, which could be said to partially overlap with the second group. During Tokugawa period, various art forms focused more on the impression that it left in people, may it be theatre plays, the genre of *ukiyo-e,* or haiku poetry, which is all about awakening a feeling, a memory or an impression in the imagination of the reader or listener through mere seventeen syllable-like units.[123]

[122] Reikichi (note 39), p. 169.
[123] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 107–111.

It was already mentioned that although it was quite a free art form with little to no regulations regarding tradition or specific artistic schools, there were still some restrictions sprouting from the functionality of the objects. These include size, shape, form and balance of the *netsuke*. They must not be too large, since they need to be worn comfortably, neither too small, since their function as a counterweight to whatever *sagemono*, or suspended object, they are attached to. Their shape has to be smooth and round, with no sharp edges that could get caught in the fabric of their wearer's clothes and damage it, or get damaged themselves by having parts broken off. This also goes for moving or mechanical *netsuke,* which had to withstand the stress of everyday wearing. And finally, what had to be carefully considered was the balance. This was especially important when the artist carved holes for the cord that it was hung on, since poorly chosen placement could mar the overall design and make the *netsuke* hang in an unnatural way. All things considered, it is no surprise that when a good design was created and tested, it was oftentimes repeated over and over again, either by the artist themselves, or their students and followers. By the end of Tokugawa period, there were books of designs in circulation, which contained woodblock print illustrations of works from various types of arts, which were meant to be used as references by other artists and to showcase what is being produced. These rarely included the names of the authors, but a number of *netsuke* designs made their appearance.[124]

6.1 FOLKLORE

The range of shape and forms these objects could take is essentially endless. There was the question of aesthetics, of course, but also of luck or particular deity's favour or power that the person wearing it hoped to invoke. For example, drifters and gamblers liked to wear designs with a skull and snake, which was believed to bring luck to them. It was also popular to wear *netsuke* depicting the zodiac sign of the wearer for the same exact reason. Other groups that were used with more than simply their artistic and aesthetic value and that were supposed to bring some sort of power to their owner were various deities and saints, both Buddhist and Taoist, legendary or historical figures from Japanese history and folktales,

[124] Reikichi (note 39), p. 108.

like the famous warrior Benkei, or the protagonist of one of the most popular tales, Momotarō, a boy who was born out of a peach stone. Another widely sourced group were *bakemono* and *yōkai*, which is a category into which fall various apparitions, demons and ghosts. [125] One of the folklore creatures was for example *tanuki*, a raccoon dog who appears as a trickster in tales, the most famous of them being *Bunbuku chagama*, where the *tanuki* shapeshifts into a teakettle and plays his belly as a drum. This popular tale inspired many artists in their work, *netsuke* carvers included. Another common subject were foxes, who are perceived as magical creatures and trickster gods. They were oftentimes depicted as standing on their hind legs, or as women, dressed as priestesses. Foxes can be often found as statues guarding entrances to shrines and they are symbols of the god Inari and their messengers. Other widely depicted mythological subjects were *tengu*, creatures with human body and eagle's beak, wings and claws, and water spirits called *kappa,* who usually appear with turtle shell and a beak. But the list of *yōkai*, supernatural entities in Japanese folklore, is seemingly endless and many more became favoured subjects in the art of *netsuke*.[126]

6.2 DEITIES

Popular deities to call onto for luck were the Seven Lucky Gods. It is said that they were chosen by a Buddhist priest when the shogun ordered to seek those that represent the perfect virtues. Seven of them were chosen since the number is considered lucky in Japanese culture. These seven gods are considered patrons of certain professions, much like the catholic saints in Europe, but their roles often overlap and they were more worshipped as a group, rather than separate individuals. The one that was the most popular was Hotei, since he is a god of fortune in general, as well as protector of children. According to a legend, he was a real zen priest and is depicted as such, bald, fat and cheerful, sometimes accompanied by children. Then there is Ebisu, who is the god of prosperity, abundance and patron of businessmen and fishermen. He is usually shown with a fishing rod, or either carrying or riding a huge *koi* fish. Daikoku, or Daikokuten, is a protector of crops and a patron of farmers and cooks, as well as the god of fertility. He is usually shown with a bale of rice, carrying a mallet, or a daikon. Daikoku is also often accompanied,

[125] Reikichi (note 39), p. 109.
[126] Barker – Smith (note 41), pp. 175–176.

or represented, by a mouse or a rat. Then, there is the only female goddess of the group, Benten, who is the patron of artists, geishas, writers, dancers and performers. She is said to bring financial fortunes and talent, as well as beauty. Benten is usually depicted as a woman playing the *biwa* lute, accompanied by a white snake, who symbolizes good fortune in Japanese folklore and is considered her messenger. The rest of the lucky gods are not as often called upon separately as the others of the group and their fields of protection and focus overlap. They are the deities of longevity, wisdom and wealth, luck and happiness and protectors of holy sites and fighters of evil.[127]

6.3 MASKS

Mask *netsuke* were worn with similar intention. Of course, they were worn for their aesthetics and the skill that went into their production was usually of high level, since it was mostly the same artist that produced these miniature versions of popular theatre or festival masks who made the larger versions as well. But masks have a very long tradition and are still widely used around Japan, not only in *noh* performances, for which they are famous around the world as well. Historically, masks were used in religious dances and rituals, which is a common practice in various cultures around the world. These dances slowly developed into theatre performances and with them, the roles and shapes of masks. One can be commonly used for various expressions of the same character, with only the change of its position towards the light. The characters they represent vary from demons to women possessed by rage or envy, to protective spirits and clown-like folk characters. It is quite common for masks belonging to terrifying demons to actually ward off evil spirits and it was not unusually to have one in a household for protection. Samurai wore different types and forms of demon masks as a part of their armours as well, for the purpose of scaring off the enemy, to show their fighting spirit and for the practical purpose of protection of their own face. In the same manner that one would put up such a mask up on the wall of their home, or their armour, these masks were carried on person in the forms of *netsuke.*

[127] Barker – Smith (note 41), pp. 175–176.

6.5 NATURE

Often, subjects were inspired by the surrounding or seasonal flora and fauna, which was strongly reflected in fashion in general. Among mechanical *netsuke*, which were already mentioned before, there was a special category which was inspired by *ukiyo-e.* Pieces with erotic themes had a popular appeal, but since they were worn in public, with women and children present, they were discouraged. The solution to this was hiding the true design in something socially acceptable, while fully exposed designs of full figures were very rare. Usually, the erotica was hidden behind a hidden mechanism and often, they were produced for the purposes of export abroad.[128]

[128] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 109–112.

7. THE QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP

There are several problems regarding the authenticity of a *netsuke*. Firstly, it is impossible to tell the age of a work based on the estimated age of the chosen materials, since those could have been gathered before the carving was made. Then, it was a common practice for students and followers of *netsuke* masters to copy their teacher's work down to the fine details, including the signature or the mark of their seal, in the rarer case that the piece was signed or marked in any way. It is also important to mention that some artists marked their works in *kakihan,* which is a personal seal executed in a highly cursive font that makes it almost indecipherable.[129] Sometimes, *netsuke* would come with boxes, but even these would scarcely be signed by the author. To some extent, this changed after foreign buyers entered the market, since Western artists commonly marked their work, and the signature, which served as a proof of authenticity to the new owners, raised the artwork's price significantly. There were artists that copied higher quality works and sold the copies as their own, signature included, which was often done after Japan opened its borders to foreigners and international market discovered this miniature art form. There is very little documentation available on carvers before the Meiji revolution of 1868 and it is quite complicated to differentiate between an original and a copy, the only real way being an educated guess based on the quality of the work. Age of the *netsuke* cannot even be determined by its state of wear and signs of use, because some pieces that might be centuries old were rarely worn and some newer ones might be scuffed and smoothed by everyday wear and seem much older.[130] It comes as no surprise then to find variations of the same piece, claiming to be the original by a famous carver, signature included, across prestigious museum collections around the world. Nowadays though, with the power of the Internet, it is much easier to navigate the vast archives and to gain the visual experience to make better informed guesses about the quality of the miniature carvings.

[129] Barker – Smith (note 41), p. 19.
[130] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 162–163.

8. JOE HLOUCHA'S *NETSUKE* COLLECTION AT NÁPRSTEK MUSEUM

About third of the *netsuke* collection at Náprstek Museum in Prague comes from the collection of Joe Hloucha, which became state property upon mutual agreement when Hloucha was still alive. Considering that the National Gallery in Prague has less than a hundred netsuke in its possession, we can say that Náprstek Museum's numbers are several times higher than is the average number in public collections in Czechia. Large museums around Europeusually have several hundreds, or even thousands, of pieces in their collections, though they often lack proper investigation and only a few pieces are usually put on display. Given the long and rich colonialist history of Great Britain, the biggest non-European art collections can be found in museums there, namely in Victoria and Albert Museum, where one can find some 1400 *netsuke* and in British Museum, where the number reaches over 2300 pieces. Compared to that, Náprstek Museum owns almost 300 *netsuke,* and we will focus on 84 of them, since they were a part of Hloucha's collection. The miniature nature of these objects turned out to be their advantage and demise in one, since it made them easier to ship across the globe in vast numbers but made them prone to misplacement and mix up.
In the following chapter of this work, we will look closely at the objects that we are lucky enough to have in a national, and not a private, collection. Private collectors are the greatest buyer force in netsuke auctions today, especially in the United States of America, and the pieces are often handed down from generation to generation, without being put on public display. With the number of copies from the late 19th and early 20th century, it makes the hunt for originals even harder. But as it was already mentioned on several occasions before, 'original' has different connotation in Japan then in the Western world. For example, the shrine in Ise, which is a rather vast complex of buildings that spreads over an area the size of a large city, is completely rebuilt every 20 years, ceremonial artefacts including. This does not water down their importance as a cultural heritage, it is simply a part of the ritual of death and renewal. This has been going on since the shrine complex was first built in 8th century and the techniques and materials used have been following the original as closely as possible. Thanks to that, building and crafting tradition from over a thousand years ago is still being kept alive and passed down to the next generations. What matters is the function of the place or the object and the way it was created. In Western countries, the approach is different. The importance lies in the historical value, in the age of a certain material and the authenticity of an artist's signature.

The majority of Hloucha's collection are *katabori netsuke.* These basically include any three dimensional carvings, ranging from 2,5 to 15 centimetres in size and their subjects vary from flora and fauna, through legendary and mythical characters, to ordinary scenes from daily life. The line between a *katabori netsuke* and an *okimono*, a decorative carving, is very thin. We can guess their original purpose, based on their size and shape, because as was described in deeper detail in the previous chapters, there were physical requirements that made a good *netsuke*. But since not all of them had a specially carved holes to pull the cord they hung from, but used the shape of the design instead, we have to make do without this distinct detail. There are several objects in Hloucha's collection that could serve both as *netsuke* and *okimono*, but are labelled as belonging to the latter and this work shall respect that. Objects will be listed based on their inventory numbers. If not specified, it is unclear what time period the pieces were made, or who the author might be. Even though Hloucha kept consistent diaries throughout his life, he did not mark down his *netsuke* purchases in much detail and we can only argue whether the object came into his possession in antique stores around Europe, or whether he brought them from his travels to Japan himself[131]. It is possible that some scarce information on *netsuke* and their purchases might be found in the diaries, but as their number is quite high and they are hand-written, it is simply not possible to study them all as a part of this master's thesis.

[131] Filip Suchomel, The Japanese Collection of the Náprstek Museum, *Annals of the Náprstek Museum*, 1999, 20(1), p.110.

8.1 KATABORI *NETSUKE*

Inventory number: 11.544

Dimensions: 4 cm tall

Dating: Unknown

Material: Ivory

The first object listed is a *netsuke* in the shape of *kinchaku*, which is a traditional Japanese drawstring bag. They are still being widely used, even nowadays, for example to carry *bento* lunch boxes, but most commonly for festive occasions, when people often dress in traditional *kimonos*. On the carved string there is a few millimetres small *netsuke* in the shape of a gourd. It is clear from the few details, like carved shading of the string, that the author was not a novice, but an experienced carver.

Inventory number: 11.545

Dimensions: 5 cm tall

Dating: Unknown

Material: A tooth of a sperm whale, or a tiger

This piece depicts a dancing figure of a fox. Its head is positioned to the side, its paws raised next to it on one side and one of the fox's legs raised. The position is reminiscent of traditional Japanese festival dances. . As was mentioned in previous chapters, foxes are considered magical animals, with shapeshifting abilities, and are seen as messengers of the god Inari.[132]This particular one is very simple, though. We can see that the way it is carved is very rough and the anatomy of the animal is not very proportional and the original shape of the tooth is still visible from its overall shape. Some details on the piece are highlighted in ink.

[132] T. Volker, *The Animal in Far Eastern Art: And Especially in the Art of the Japanese Netsuke, with References to Chinese Origins, Traditions, Legends, and Art*, Leiden 1975, pp.75–76.

Inventory number 11.546

Dimensions: 4,6 cm tall

Dating: Unknown

Material: Deer horn

This *netsuke* is carved out of a horn of a sika deer, which is a species native to Japanese isles. It depicts a group of clams and mussels, which are carved in a rough way. But even though the craftsmanship put into this particular piece might not be of the highest levels, its rough expression works nicely with the material used.

Inventory number 11.547

Dimensions: 8,2 cm long

Dating: Unknown

Material: Deer horn

A top of a deer horn was used for this piece, which shows only minimal carving to form the shape of a bamboo sprout. It is among the largest in the collection, but a more refined artistic skill of the carver is clear. It was either made by the deer hunter themselves, or by a less skilled carver who gained a piece of leftover material. Its condition shows frequent use, so we can be sure it fulfilled its function.

Inventory number 11.549

Dimensions: Not specified

Dating: Late 19th/Early 20th century

Material: Ceramics

The following piece is one of the few in this collection that is made in ceramics and we can understand why it was not very common material for *netsuke*, as it is slightly chipped and damaged on its sides. It shows a wicker basket with an armed man, which, to the knowledge and research capacity of the author of this thesis, refers to no famous Japanese tale or a legend. It has a brown patina, which points to commonly used pottery material and the overall quality, which is quite mediocre, tells us that it was probably made for Western buyers after the Meiji revolution.

Inventory number 11.550

Dimensions: 6 cm tall

Dating: Early 20th century

Material: Wood

This partially polychrome wooden carving shows a male figure wearing traditional Japanese *kimono.* It carries the signature of Hikari, who went by another name of Kano Tessai. He studied sculpture and painting in Nara, where he was a monk. He was active in the second half of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, but based on his other work, this particular piece is quite clearly not his work.[133] The carving is very rough and cannot be compared to the artistic skill of real Hikari, we can assume that it was made in early 20th century for the foreign market.

Inventory number 11.551

Dimensions: 8,4 cm tall

Dating: 18th century

Material: Wood

This piece is classified by Náprstek Museum as an *okimono*. This carving shows a *komus*ō monk, wearing a *tengai* hat that serves as a mask, playing their signature *shakuhachi* flute and carrying a bag on their back. This Zen Buddhist sect experienced the height of its popularity in 18th century and by the time of Meiji period it managed to be already fallen from grace, mostly due to the misuse of their attributes that granted anonymity to criminals and spies. Even though the sect lost its popularity, their look is widely used in modern-day media and it became one of the recognizable trademarks of the country. This piece is quite nicely carved and based on the time-limited popularity of the sect, we can assume that it was made in 18th century.

[133] Reikichi (note 39), p. 298.

Inventory number 11.552

Dimensions: 4,2 x 3,3 cm

Dating: 19th century

Material: Stone

A *netsuke* in the shape of a tortoise hiding in its shell. There are small scratches on the surface and small chippings can be seen on the sides of the shell, but the carving is of a good quality. Such subject was fairly common, since the shape of the animal meets the requirements of a good *netsuke*. Tortoises in Japan, as well as around many other countries and cultures around the world, are symbols of longevity and wisdom and are said to bring good luck. They are also connected to two of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune, Jurojin and Fukurokuju.[134] They can be seen in many shrines and temples around the country, kept in ponds in their gardens.

Inventory number 11.553 [Illustration 1–2]

Dimensions: 4,4 cm tall

Dating: 19th century

Material: Wood

This fine piece is in the shape of an eggplant. The cord is pulled through a hole in the top part, where the stem of the fruit curls to the side. The fruit's bottom is tipped to the side and the overall shape, together with a big leaf on the opposite side, feels very light and dynamic. Eggplants are, due to their shape, highly suitable to serve as *netsuke*, same as gourds, which were used before carved *netsuke* slowly developed into a form of art. In Japan, they are also symbols of good luck. On New Year, dreams are said to have prophetic meaning and to dream of Mount Fuji, a hawk and an eggplant is believed to mean great luck in the upcoming year.

[134] Volker (note 132), pp.170–173.

Inventory number 11.554
Dimensions: 5,4 cm tall
Dating: Early 20th century
Material: Wood

This partially polychrome wooden piece depicts a standing male figure in a traditional *eboshi* hat, holding a pouch of money in his right hand, a fan in his left and carrying a book. The carving is quite rough and the overall quality is not very high. It was probably produced for Western buyers.

Inventory number 11.555

Dimensions: 5 x 4 cm

Dating: Early 20th century

Material: Ceramics

This is one of the few ceramic pieces that can be found in Hloucha's collection, in the shape of a seashell and done in white glaze. Seashells were used as *netsuke* due to their convenient shape in the past. Artistically exquisite variations of shell-shape pieces exist, where whole sceneries are carved inside of the material, something that only a true master carver could create, but this piece is quite ordinary, with no further ornaments painted in the glaze. It was probably produced for the Western market.

Inventory number 11.556 [Illustration 3–4]

Dimensions: 3,4 x 3 cm

Dating: Unknown

Material: Ceramics

Another ceramic piece, this time glazed in dark brown and of very good quality. It should belong to Bizen ware from Okayama prefecture, where one of the oldest ceramic workshops in Japan, some 9 000 years old, is based.[135] The sitting form belongs to the founder of Zen Buddhism, in Japan known as Daruma[136], who is said to have spent nine years meditating whilst facing a cave wall and losing the feeling in his legs. His legless form is known around the world in the form of round dolls, usually painted in bright red, which are believed to bring luck, but are given to children as toys as well. In the case of this *netsuke*, Daruma is holding

[135] *Japan* (note 117), p. 111.
[136] *Japan* (note 117), pp.273-274.

his right leg and his facial expression indicates some pain. It might have served to its wearer as a reminder to persevere in their hard work, or to remind them of the importance of meditation. As far as Daruma *netsuke* go, this particular depiction is not common. The monk is often depicted in his legless form, or sitting in a lotus position, looking serene and enlightened. This piece shows him as fairly human, making him more relatable to the ordinary people.

Inventory number 11.557 [Illustration 5–6]
Dimensions: 5,3 cm tall
Dating: 18th century
Material: Wood

This piece depicts a figure of an old male, wearing a wide travel hat and a long garment with wide sleeves that flow organically around the body and add a sense of movement. The figure is carrying a tall wooden staff with a gourd water bottle attached to the top. It could be one of the Seven Lucky Gods, Jurōjin, the god of wisdom and longevity, but in other depictions, he is often accompanied by a deer and carries a scroll, instead of a gourd bottle attached to his staff. This *netsuke* bears the signature of Yoshitomo, a carver who was active until the 1780s, but more information is lacking.[137] Judging by the overall quality, it can be assumed that this piece was created by the signed author and not by a carver from later period.

Inventory number 11.559
Dimensions: 5,6 cm long
Dating: Late 19th/ Early 20th century
Material: Dark wood

The overall quality of this *netsuke* depicting a mouse sitting on a gourd is not very interesting, the carving style rough and lacking any smaller details. Mice and rats in natural environments were quite a popular subject in *netsuke* production, but there are others, more memorable, in Hloucha's collection. Based on the look of the piece, it was probably produced after Meiji revolution.

[137] Reikichi, p. 308.

Inventory number 11.560 [Illustration 7–8]

Dimensions: 5,4 cm wide

Dating: Late 19th/ Early 20th century

Material: Wood, possibly bamboo

A pair of chestnuts, the one on the left has a hole in its central part, carved intentionally. Overall, the carving is a bit rough, but the *netsuke* is quite well-made. It turns out that the piece is a copy of a more skilfully carved version that is a part of Ethnographic collection at Bern Historical Museum in Switzerland, stored under Accession number Ethno/BHM 271. The composition is vertically flipped, with the hole originally being in the left chestnut, same as in the version from Hloucha's collection. In the original work in Bern, the hole is occupied by a worm carved out of ivory. It is a great example of the differences between approaches to what is beautiful in arts in Japan and Europe of that time. A worm eating away on the nut would most probably be discarded as of lesser quality, but if one looks into *netsuke* in the shapes of nuts and fruits, they will come across many such examples where bugs and other small creatures are inhabiting the small carvings and mostly serve as an aesthetic elevation of the whole piece thanks to different materials and colours used in their forms. It is impossible to say whether Hloucha bought his pair of chestnuts with a worm as well, or whether that was above the skill level of the artist who created the piece. It is possible that the worm was a part of the copy as well, but got lost over time due to a lack of proper attachment to the wooden material.

Inventory number 11.561

Dimensions: 5,2 x 3,7 cm

Dating: Unknown

Material: Wood

This piece, depicting a stylised sakura blossom, was most probably created for the season of blooming cherry blossoms when people all across Japan gather for picnics and festivities to enjoy under the blossoming trees, marking the beginning of spring. The tradition of *hanami*, which translates to 'flower watching,' has been celebrated in the country for centuries, going back to 8th century and it is customary to wear clothes and accessories specifically made with blossoming cherry trees in mind, since they remind us of the fleeting beauty and swiftness

of the passage of time in our short lives. The flower is beautifully symmetrical and the centre is adorned with tiny details that were surely made by a professional carver.

Inventory number 32.245

Dimensions: 4,7 cm tall

Dating: 18th century

Material: Wood

A male figure, belonging to a Chinese god of war, Guan Yu[138], who was a real historical figure living in early 3rd century and whose status was eventually elevated to that of a deity. He is the symbol of loyalty and righteousness and fairly popular in arts and media even today. Temples raised purely in his name can be found all around China, Korea and Japan and his spirit is said to have helped keep up morale of soldiers and aid them in battles numerous times across these countries as well.[139] The carving style is a bit rough, with facial features quite smoothed down with time and use.

Inventory number 32.246

Dimensions: 7,3 x 2,8 cm

Dating: Unknown

Material: Wood

Two male figures sitting down with a large umbrella. They are wearing dress and hats suggesting they are shrine monks, one of them is fixing the other's hair while he holds his *eboshi* hat in his hands and bowing slightly. The anatomy of the figures is realistic and their poses do not feel rigid, but very lively. It can be said that a skilled carver produced this *netsuke*, probably basing his work on a sketch from shrine life.

Inventory number 32.247
Dimensions: 3,2 cm
Dating: Unknown
Material: Wood

A lotus fruit *netsuke* with a cicada on the side. The way it is carved is quite simple and rough, yet the overall look is fairly pleasant. In Buddhism, lotus is a symbol of reaching enlightenment due to its ability to grow from the muddy bottom of a pond to the surface and blossoming in

[138] Alternative spelling in use is Kan'u or Kan Yu.
[139] *Japan* (note 117), p. 744.

the sunlight there. Hence, they are often grown in ponds and lakes around Buddhist temples around the world. Cicadas are native to Japan and their life cycle, where the adult climbs out of its chrysalis and leaves it behind, is the reason why they are a symbol of rebirth as well.[140]

Inventory number 32.250 [Illustration 9–10]
Dimensions: 4,8 cm tall
Dating: 19th century
Material: Wood

A male figure carrying a box of goods to sell. His head is tilted upwards, to the side and he is holding a round object to his mouth with his right hand. Said object is probably a paper balloon that he is blowing up, as street vendors selling candy often did to attract kids to their business. The symbol on the crate he wears hung from his neck can be seen in other candy sellers' *netsuke* around the internet, and was probably commonly recognized as their sign. This piece, previously thought to be a seller of a sweet rice wine called *mirin*, is labelled in the museum documents as an *okimono*.

Inventory number 32.251
Dimensions: 3,6 cm tall
Dating: 19th century
Material: Ivory

The first of the three *netsuke* of Ebisu[141], one of the Seven Lucky Gods. He is the patron of fishermen, which is why he is usually depicted with a fishing rod or holding a fish, as is the case in this piece. The fish is a Japanese sea bream called Tai and it is a symbol of good luck in Japanese folklore. Ebisu is sitting cross-legged, with his right hand on his knee and his left hand is holding down the fish. He is wearing an *eboshi* hat that is folded in its front part, which is typical for depictions of Ebisu. The quality of the *netsuke* is quite good, there are smaller details and patterns that are highlighted in ink and certain level of skill was needed to carve this piece, but Ebisu's posture has a bit of a stiff feeling to it. The details of his face are very good, yet his chin has unnaturally sharp shape. But overall, this piece is well-made.

[140] Volker (note 132), pp. 30–32.
[141] *Japan* (note 117), p. 304.

Inventory number 32.252 [Illustration 11–12]

Dimensions: 4cm long

Dating: Unknown

Material: Bone

This *netsuke* is artistically among the best of the whole Hloucha's collection. This piece, in the shape of a clam, could be thought to have been picked up at the shore mere moments ago. The level of detail, which makes it seem very realistic, is truly remarkable. When flipped over, we can see the foot of the sea creature, curled along its sides. It is carved out of a bone, with the holes for the cord inlaid with a material covered with green patina. The piece is signed as Ryusai, but as there was more than one artist known by that name,[142] it is hard to say which one of them it could be. Based on the overall quality, it is safe to say that it was truly created by the artist who signed the piece.

Inventory number 32.253

Dimensions: 2,6 x 3,4 cm

Dating: Unknown

Material: Dark wood

A sitting monkey, holding a peach as big as its own body with both hands and pressing against it. This piece is fairly simply done, with no major details, except for the basic features and lines on the peach leaf. Monkeys are fairly common subject in *netsuke*, as well as other art forms, as they live around the Japanese isles. They are thought to be messengers of gods and are part of the zodiac in Japan. Monkeys appear in various fables and stories as well and a monkey also becomes an associate of Momotarō, one of the most famous heroes of Japanese folk tales, who was born out of a peach stone.

[142] Reikichi, p. 276–7.

Inventory number 32.255 [Illustration 13–14]

Dimensions: Not specified

Dating: 19th century

Material: Wood, lacquer

This *netsuke* is also one of the most interesting and skilfully executed of the Hloucha's collection. It depicts two eggplants, one of them being about half the size than the other one, with a snail atop the bigger one. It is executed in wood which is partially polychrome with lacquer, in some parts, like the snail itself, a golden one. The piece seems incredibly lifelike, with the lacquer adding the feeling of natural sliminess to the snail and makes the eggplants look freshly picked. It is clear that it was made by a skilled artist who must have been used to working with lacquer, based on the lightness with which it is applied.

Inventory number 32.257 [Illustration 17–18]

Dimensions: 4,6 x 2,4 cm

Dating: 19th century

Material: Deer horn, black coral

A young Nara deer, recumbent on the ground, with his feet folded under him and his head tilted back to the right side. This same exact composition, with the same details, including the front legs being slightly too long, appears in many versions and while this one is clearly not the original on which the other copies were based, it belongs to those of higher quality. Other variations of this *netsuke,* as well as on that might possibly be the original piece, which is currently a part of a collection of Bristol Museum, are placed to early 19th century, we can safely assume then that this particular piece was produced no earlier than that.

Inventory number 32.258

Dimensions: 2,5 x 4 cm

Dating: Unknown

Material: Wood

This piece is quite interesting in its obscurity. It is hard to determine what the object is supposed to depict and could be anything from a kaki fruit to a cluster of mushroom tops, growing from a central piece. The round shapes are nicely polished with no dents.

Inventory number 32.259 [Illustration 19–20]

Dimensions: 3,3 x 3,3 cm

Dating: 2nd half of 19th century

Material: Wood, black coral

A toad sitting on an old wooden bucket. This piece is carved out of wood , with nails in the sides of the bucket inlaid with a black material, probably coral. The *netsuke* is signed as Masanao, but when compared to other *netsuke* of toads on buckets, which seems to have been a popular subject, it is clear that this particular one is a well-made copy. What gives it away on the first sight is the pattern in the bucket. In the piece from Náprstek Museum, there are simple lines going in the same direction, while in the original, these are carved in the pattern found in wood. The problem of determining the time period of this piece's production is that there were several carvers in succession line known under the name of Masanao and several of them were known for carving toads.[143]

Inventory number 32.260
Dimensions: 2,4 cm tall
Dating: Unknown
Material: Wood

A beautifully carved pumpkin *netsuke*, with a hole for the cord created by a stem that curves to the side. The way it is carved gives the object a realistic texture, while having a fresh and expressive feeling. The overall quality is very good and the object can be assumed to have been created in times before the Meiji revolution for local production, instead of the Western market.

[143] Reikichi, p. 256–7.

Inventory number 32.261 [Illustration 21–23]

Dimensions: 3,4 cm tall

Dating: 19th century

Material: Ivory

This piece is labelled by Náprstek Museum as an *okimono* and it belongs among the best of the whole Hloucha collection. A tanuki, an animal similar to a raccoon, which is native to Japanese isles and a recurring character in many tales there, dressed in human clothes, sitting down and holding the handle of a wicker basket filled with pieces of coal in his left paw. The tanuki's fur is carved with tiny markings which make the piece of ivory seem like a real fur, his *kimono* and scarf around his neck are adorned with intricate pattern and the wicker basket is carved in such a detailed way that there is no doubt that this piece was produced by a master carver. It is signed 'Masayuki,' but we are facing the same reoccurring problem as with many other pieces what bear a signature and that is that there was a family line of carvers that worked under the same name.[144]

Inventory number 32.262
Dimensions: 5,6 cm tall
Dating: 18th century
Material: Wood

A pair of *manzai* dancers, done in wood and signed as 'Ichigyoku.' The dance used to originally be performed at the celebrations of New Year, originating in Heian period, but eventually developed into a sort of stand-up comedy with two participants. The comedy relies on wordplay and common misunderstanding between the characters. One of the figures is holding a fan and the other a drum, props that are typical for the *manzai* performance.[145] The quality of the carving is quite nice and can be assumed to have been created by the signed artist.[146]

[144] Reikichi (note 39), pp. 259–260.
[145] *Japan* (note 117), pp. 921–922.
[146] Reikichi (note 39), p. 234.

Inventory number 32.263

Dimensions: 4,3 cm tall

Dating: 18th century

Material: Deer horn

A standing figure of an old male, belonging to Fukurokuju, one of the Seven Lucky Gods. He is the deity of happiness, wealth and longevity, often mixed up or confused with Jurojin, whose *netsuke* is also a part of Hloucha's collection. Fukurokuju's body is slightly twisted, the clothes flowing around the figure almost fluid-like. His head is tilted upwards, his face smiling. The overall quality of the piece is very good.

Inventory number 32.264
Dimensions: 7,3 cm tall
Dating: 18th century
Material: Ivory

A carving of a great quality, depicting Bashiko *sennin*[147], a legendary Chinese healer, who used his powers to heal a sick dragon with acupuncture. With his right hand, he is holding the dragon's head in place by his horns, while his left hand is raised above his head in almost dance-like stance.

Inventory number 32.265

Dimensions: 3,9 cm wide

Dating: 19th century

Material: Ceramics

One of the few ceramic pieces in the collection, depicting a cluster of clams of different sizes and shapes, glazed in various colours. The glaze adds a lovely shine to them, which makes the piece look quite realistic, almost as if one picked them right off the beach. Based on its quality, compared to another ceramic shell netsuke[148] in the collection, this one was most probably produced before the Meiji revolution.

[147] *Japan* (note 117), pp. 1346–1347
[148] Inventory number 11.555.

Inventory number 32.266

Dimensions: 7 cm long

Dating: Unknown

Material: Ivory

This is another of the more obscure pieces from the collection, bearing symbols of wealth and happiness, called *takara-zukushi*.[149] These symbols are linked with the Seven Lucky Gods as well and they are popular to combine for example in *kimono* patterns. There is a cloak of invisibility, a hat that allows the wearer to change their appearance, together with carved symbols of Daikoku's magic hammer, *fundo* weight and a *choji* clover.[150] There is also an object that might have been a key, which got damaged, but it is hard to tell. Overall quality of the object is not very high, the carvings painted with ink being quite rough and oftentimes not straight, indicating the hand that carved them was not too certain in its movements.

Inventory number 32.267

Dimensions: 1,8 x 3,7 cm

Dating: Late 19th century

Material: Deer horn, black coral

A rat sitting on leaves, with a nut by its right hind leg and its tail curled around the right side of its body. Its ears are pulled flat to the rat's head and the fur is given structure thanks to small continuous carvings. The original shape of the horn, from which the piece is made, is still visible in the overall box-like shape of the carving. There are several other versions of the same composition, with only slight differences, like the rat's tail being positioned on the animal's back, or a vertical flip in the composition, that can be found on auction sites, but it is hard to determine which one of them is the oldest and while none of them is especially masterfully carved, it cannot be guessed whether a different original piece can be found somewhere in the world, or whether it was lost to time. It can be assumed, that the version in Náprstek Museum comes from late 19th century.

[149] *Japan* (note 117), p. 1190.
[150] Reikichi (note 39), p. 242.

Inventory number 32.268

Dimensions: 3,6 cm tall

Dating: 19th century

Material: Ivory

Fukurokuju, one of the Seven Lucky Gods, playing a game of horse-pretence with a child. Fukurokuju is on all four and the child is riding on his back, while holding onto a strip of fabric that is wrapped around the deity's extremely large forehead. While the overall carving quality is quite good, other versions of the same composition can be found on various auction sites. They have much more details carved, especially regarding the patterns on the figures' clothes. One of the other versions is signed as 'Minkoku' and quality-wise, there is no reason to doubt the claim.[151]

Inventory number 32.269

Dimension: 3 x 3,7 cm

Dating: 19th century

Material: Deer horn

A stylized chrysanthemum floating on water, known as *kikusui*. Chrysanthemum serves as the official seal of the Emperor of Japan and the flowers are regarded as symbols of nobility and longevity. It is said that drinking the morning dew from the leaves of chrysanthemum flowers will grant the person eternal youth. The crest of *kikusui* is also connected with a legendary warrior and the head of Impertial forces during 14th century when Kamakura shogunate was overthrown and the imperial power was restored, Kusonoki Masashige.[152] A shrine in his name was raised after the Meiji restoration and it can be assumed that this *netsuke* comes from the same time period. The style is fairly simple and a bit rough, indicating that it was not produced by a particularly skilled carver.

[151] Reikichi (note 39), p. 262.
[152] *Japan* (note 117), p. 851.

Inventory number 32.271 [Illustration 24–25]
Dimension: 1,8 x 1,8 x 4,3 cm
Dating: Unknown
Material: Lacquer

One of the few lacquer *netsuke* in the collection, this one in the form of a small basket or a box. On its sides there are diamond-shaped ornaments with tiny stylized flowers. On the central part of the lid, there is a metal ring to which a cord can be attached. The ring is fixed in a metal base in the form of a chrysanthemum flower. The object is executed in red lacquer called *tsuishu*.[153] Even though there are small chippings visible on the corners and sides of the object, is of good quality and the level of skill needed to work with the lacquer suggests that it was created by a skilled and proved artist.

Inventory number 32.273

Dimension: 3,9 cm tall

Dating: Late 19th century

Material: Ivory

A male figure, naked to his waist, sitting down with one leg in semi-lotus posture and the other with a knee lifted high to his left side, while lifting a huge rock above his head. There is a pattern carved and highlighted in the rock and the man's irises are also painted in black, even though one of them is looking into a different direction than the other. The overall quality is not very high and the carving style is quite rough.

Inventory number 32.274

Dimension: 5,3 x 3,3 cm

Dating: Unknown

Material: Ivory

An interesting piece, in the shape of a rectangle. It depicts a cluster of *reishi* mushrooms, which have been regarded as the mushrooms of immortality in Eastern medicine for millennia. While the carving is quite rough, the curling pattern of the mushroom hats is recognizable. It is possible that the piece was carved for a healer or a vendor who worked with these mushrooms, serving as an indicative sign for other people.

[153] Reikichi (note 39), p. 77.

Inventory number 32.275 [Illustration 26–27]

Dimension: 2,3 cm tall

Dating: Unknown

Material: Ivory

An *okame* lying on her right side, supporting herself with her right arm and holding a giant mushroom that is as big as her with her left hand. This subject can be found in numerous variations, yet it seems that this exact composition is an original. Mushrooms are oftentimes connected with fertility, given their phallic shape and since the character *okame* is perceived as the example of the perfect wife that will make any man happy, this *netsuke* is in its essence quite erotic. Even though the carving is a bit rough, the quality is very nice.

Inventory number 32.276 [Illustration 28–29]

Dimension: 1,6 x 2,6 cm

Dating: Unknown

Material: Bone

A *shime-daiko* drum on a wooden base, which is a type used in traditional Japanese music and *noh* theatre.[154] The details on the drum are executed with great care, having a very realistic feeling to them. The subject of drums, not accompanied by a figure, human or animal, playing them, is not common in *netsuke* at all, which makes this piece, together with the quality in which it is carved, truly remarkable. We can assume that the person for whom this *netsuke* was produced, was a great patron of theatre or even a musician themselves.

Inventory number 32.277

Dimension: 4,4 cm tall

Dating: Late 19th century

Material: Bone

Fuujin, a Shinto deity of winds, which he is carrying in a bag on his shoulders. It is signed 'Ju,' which was a carver active in the second half of 19th century and who worked mainly in ivory.[155] The way this piece is carved is quite rough, but expressive at the same time.

[154] *Japan* (note 117), p. 1497.
[155] Reikichi (note 39), p. 240.

Not much is known about the artist working under the name of Ju, hence it is hard to determine whether this truly is his work.

Inventory number 32.279
Dimension: 3 cm tall
Dating: Unknown
Material: Dark wood

Dragons are generally perceived as protectors of humans and a symbol of luck and bravery. This particular piece is an example of how delicate *netsuke* can be and how important it is to follow the rules regarding shape and the avoidance of sharp edges in *netsuke* production, since the coiled dragon was damaged through handling and lost its legs and claws. Otherwise, this piece is carved quite nicely.

Inventory number 32.280
Dimension: 7,9 cm tall
Dating: 19th century
Material: Ivory

Hotei, one of the Seven Lucky Gods, standing with his belly uncovered, right arm by his body, while the left is holding a bag of his possessions, probably to cover himself from rain. Several other versions of the same composition can be found, with a wooden version, currently a part of collection in the Minneapolis Institute of Art probably being the original which the other carvers copied. The wooden version is thought to have been created in late 18th century, so we can assume that the one in Náprstek Museum dates to early 19th century. It is quite nicely carved, but compared with the piece found in Minneapolis Institute of Art, the carving feels a bit heavy and the posture of Hotei rigid.

Inventory number 32.284 [Illustration 32–33]
Dimension:
Dating: 19th century
Material: Nut, black coral

A Daruma, in his legless form, fully wrapped in his garment, carved out of a nut, with the lower half and most of the back left with almost no artistic intervention. The quality of the carving is very good. There is one other version of the same composition that can be found on auction

sites, with the signature 'Kogyoku.'[156] While both look almost identical, on closer inspection it becomes clear that the *netsuke* in Náprstek Museum is a copy of the other one. It lacks certain fine details in the facial expression, for example. But the overall quality is still very good. While there were several artists working under the same name, we can still place the time period of this piece's creation to late 19th century.

Inventory number 32.288 [Illustration 37–38]
Dimension: 3,7 x 3,7 cm
Dating: Unknown
Material: Wood

This piece is labelled as an *okimono* by the museum. It depicts a human figure sitting on a water buffalo and playing a flute. This seemed to be quite a popular subject that can be found in different types of art and even modern media and numerous variations in different sizes, executions and materials can be stumbled upon. While this particular version is quite clearly a copy of a more skilfully executed piece and is carved quite roughly, following only the basic shapes and textures of both the buffalo and the figure sitting atop of it, it is still very nice.

Inventory number 32.289
Dimension: 4,5 cm long
Dating: Unknown
Material: Wood

Momotarō climbing out of his peach. While the boy is carved quite roughly, the rest of the fruit is executed in better detail, indicating that the author was probably not as skilled in carving human figures. The stem of the peach, from which a couple of leaves is growing, is curled to the side and offers a place to attach the cord. The overall quality of the piece is quite good.

[156] Reikichi (note 39), p. 248.

Inventory number 32.290

Dimension: 3,3 cm tall

Dating:

Material: Bone

A crouching *okame*, wrapped in her clothes with only her head and left hand which cradles her chin peeking out. The shape is nicely rounded this way and thus makes the perfect *netsuke.* The carving is quite well executed.

Inventory number 32.291

Dimension: 5,7 cm tall

Dating: Late 18th/ Early 19th century

Material: Ivory

A human figure wearing a skirt made out of grass, which used to be quite common, albeit stereotypical and questionable depiction of the people native to the south of the main Japanese isles. The person is carrying a large shell in both hands, left foot is raised up to right knee and their head is tilted upwards. The way the piece is carved is a bit rough.

Inventory number 32.292 [Illustration 39–40]

Dimension: 4.3 cm tall

Dating: Late 18th/ Early 19th century

Material: Deer horn

Minamoto Yoriyoshi breaking a piece of rock apart with the tip of his bow to provide water for his troops.[157] This piece is quite interesting, not because of its artistic value, but because this particular historical figure and specific scene is not common in *netsuke*, or sculpture in general, it can mostly be found in paintings, probably since he was a warrior admired especially by the samurai class and they were able to afford them. The carving is quite rough, but based on the posture, with the head tilted and facing upwards and the body having a typical curve to it, we can assume it was created in late 18th or early 19th century.

[157] *Japan* (note 117), p. 300.

Inventory number 32.293

Dimension: 9,4 cm tall

Dating: Late 18th/ Early 19th century

Material: Wood

Gama sennin [158] with a toad sitting on his back.His face is facing to the left, his hair tied in a bun atop his head and we can see that he is wearing a garment made out of leaves under his clothes. He is believed to have possessed magical knowledge about healing drugs and medicine and to have the ability to change into a toad himself. Gama sennin depicted on his travels was quite a popular subject and the same exact composition, just vertically flipped and with some minor differences, can be found as well. It is hard to determine which one is the original and which one is the copy, since they are both quite nicely executed.

Inventory number 32.294

Dimension: 5,9 cm tall

Dating:

Material: Ivory

A carving of two Zen Buddhist monks, Kanzan and Jittoku, standing next to each other, while one is looking into a scroll that he holds in his hands and the other one is facing upwards. They are mostly depicted together in pair, wondering nature and laughing together. The scroll is in many instances shown blank, suggesting that written tractates and sutras are nothing compared to the knowledge one can find in nature.[159] The carving is quite simple and rough, not executed in much detail.

[158] Patrizia Jirka-Schmitz, *Netsuke: The Trumpf Collection*, Stuttgart 2000, p. 75.
[159] *Japan* (note 117), p. 744.

Inventory number 32.296

Dimension: 2,3 x 8,7 cm

Dating: Late 19th century

Material: Ivory

A male figure, sitting by a giant gourd bottle that is as big as him. Probably a gourd bottle maker, shown whilst working on his next piece. The style is rough and not very detailed, with some parts, like the eyes of the man, highlighted in ink.

Inventory number 32.297

Dimension: 3,3 x 3,6 cm

Dating: 19th century

Material: Ivory

An *okame* sitting down and in her right hand holding a *temari* ball on a string, which a small puppy is trying to reach with its paws. The dog is lying on its back on *okame's* overcoat. The details on this *netsuke* are very well executed and the flow of the *kimono* fabric is skilfully carved. There are also intricate patterns, reproducing real *shippo* and *mame-shibori kimono* prints, finely carved on the clothes of the woman. Details are highlighted in ink. The face of the *okame* is looking down at the playing puppy lovingly, the whole scene having a very domestic feeling to it.

Inventory number 32.298

Dimension: 2,4 cm tall

Dating: 19th century

Material: Ivory

A young boy running around with a big Daruma doll in both of his hands and laughing. This piece is of very nice quality, there are details highlighted with ink, like the pattern print on the boy's *kimono* or his facial features. This *netsuke* was probably carved in the beginning of 19th century, when genre scenes from the buzzing life in the streets served as inspiration to many artists.

Inventory number 32.300

Dimension: 6,3 cm tall

Dating: Unknown

Material: Dark wood

A monkey kneeling down and hugging a big peach to its face, its head turned to the left. This piece is carved only in basic shapes, the only minor details being the outline of facial features of the monkey, suggesting that it was not carved by a professional artist.

Inventory number 32.301

Dimension: 2,9 x 4,2 cm

Dating: 19th century

Material: Ivory

Ebisu, one of the Seven Lucky Gods, sitting down and holding a big Tai fish to the ground. The composition suggests a sketch from a fish market being used as a reference for this carving. Ebisu here feels like an ordinary fisherman holding his catch down to gut it for further business. The carving is a bit rough in some parts, for example the hands of the deity, but overall it is quite nice.

Inventory number 32.302

Dimension: 3,9 cm long

Dating: 19th century

Material: Dark wood

Quite a simple carving of a rat, but effective and nice. Its eyes are not inlaid with a different material, but their outline is carved instead. Its ears are pulled flat against its back, its legs under the body. The fur of the rat is carved in small narrow strokes. This piece is signed 'Masabumi.' Whilst not much is known about this carver, a few pieces signed by the same name can be found and their style and quality suggests that this rat piece in Náprstek museum truly comes from this artist's workshop.[160]

[160] Reikichi (note 39), p. 254.

Inventory number 32.303

Dimension: 5,7 cm tall

Dating: Early 19th century

Material: Wood

A standing figure of a monkey, dressed as a shrine servant, wearing an *eboshi* hat on its head. In its right hand, which is held to its chest, is a scroll and in its left hand a set of *kagura suzu* bells. As was mentioned before, monkeys are perceived as messengers of gods and there is a shrine in Tokyo, Hie-jinja [161], which has various statues of monkeys around, who supposedly guard the place and carry the prayers of the worshippers to the gods. We can assume that this *netsuke* was inspired by a visit to the shrine.

Inventory number 32.305 [Illustration 41–42]

Dimension: 5cm long

Dating: Unknown

Material: Ivory

One of the best pieces in the Hloucha collection in Náprstek museum when it comes to artistic skill, depicting a dormouse on a grape vine. It is executed in great detail, especially the fur of the animal, which is not carved in simple strokes, instead, each hair seems to stand out from the body and together they create a very realistic structure. There is a grape leaf above the animal's back, the branch of the vine pushing into its side and the dormouse is sorting through the grapes. The artist of this piece was not afraid to use negative space even in a carving of such small size and created for the strain of practical use. The carving feels very light and delicate, without having any dents or other signs of damage. It can be assumed to have been created before the Meiji restoration.

[161] *Japan* (note 117), p. 527.

Inventory number 32.306

Dimension: 4,4 cm long

Dating: Late 18th century

Material: Walrus tusk

A writer, lying on his left side, supporting his head with his left hand and holding a brush in his right. Vertical cracks can be seen along the surface. The carving style and shape is accommodated to the given material. While the carving is not very detailed, it is of nice quality.

Inventory number 32.307 [Illustration 43–44]

Dimension: 4 cm tall

Dating: Early 20th century

Material: Ceramics

Hotei, one of the Seven Lucky Gods, standing with a fan in his left hand and a bag in his right. His clothes are open to reveal his chest and belly, as is common in the case of this character. It is one of the few ceramic pieces in the collection and artistically lies on the more interesting end of the spectrum.

Inventory number 32.308

Dimension: 5cm long

Dating: Unknown

Material: Dark wood

A group of bean pods. These were quite a popular subject in *netsuke*, given their round elongated shape, which is very practical for such objects. This piece does not contain many fine details, but it is clear that it was carved by a skilful artist, suggested by negative space between stems and leaves in the top part of the object.

Inventory number 32.309

Dimension: 3,8 cm tall

Dating: Unknown

Material: Wood, lacquer

A figure of an older man, sitting down with his legs crossed, holding a big peach on a leaf in his hands. The fruit is painted with black and golden lacquer, suggesting that there is something special about it. The fruit is believed to bring long life and is a subject of various tales, the most famous of them being the aforementioned Momotarō. The carving is not executed in too many finer details, but it is quite well made.

Inventory number 32.310

Dimension:

Dating: Late 18th/ Early 19th century

Material: Wood

An adult human figure with a child by its left side. In the past, it was suggested that the adult is one of Chinese immortals, Zhangli Quan, with a child servant. This was probably suggested by a large fan which the person is holding in their right hand, which refers to his ability to raise the dead with such magical fan. But this seems to be the end of any similarities. Zhangli Quan is mostly depicted wearing his hair pulled into two buns atop of his head and with his clothes open on his chest and belly, while this is not the case in this piece. While the figure's belly is protruding, it seems like we might be looking at a carving of a pregnant woman, accompanied by a child that is holding a ball in its hands.

Inventory number 32.312

Dimension: 4,6 cm tall

Dating: Unknown

Material: Wood

Sennin Tobosaku, sitting on a giant peach and holding an open scroll in his hands. In legend, Tobosaku stole peaches of immortality and became immortal himself, which would explain the wide smile on his face in this *netsuke.* The style is quite simple, with only few details, but the composition works nicely.

Inventory number 32.314

Dimension: 2.8 x 4,3 cm

Dating: 19th century

Material: Ivory

Another genre scene of a male vegetable vendor, sitting next to a wicker basket full of big pumpkins. While it is carved a bit roughly, details are highlighted in ink and the composition suggests that it was based on a sketch from a real life.

Inventory number 32.315

Dimension: 3,8 x 2,5 cm

Dating: 19th century

Material: Ivory

Daikoku[162], one of the Seven Lucky Gods, sitting by a bundle in which a Chinese toddler is wrapped. Daikoku is the deity of good fortune and wealth, in this case, he might be giving a blessing to the child with his mallet, which he holds in his left hand over the bundle, while the child is reaching to it with its left hand. Even though Hotei is traditionally seen as the protector of children, there is for example a print from the workshop of Utamaro II., who depicted blessing a Chinese child in similar way as is the case in this work, created in early 19th century. It is possible that this print was an inspiration to this *netsuke*. Even though some parts are carved in a rougher manner, for example the hands of both figures, there are finer details and patterns in Daikoku's clothes and the child's blankets. The work is signed 'Gyokuzan,' but based on the visible differences in the carving style, it is clear that the author was different than in another piece from Hloucha's collection, a mask *netsuke* under the inventory number 32.280. It is unclear whether this is the work of another of the Gyokuzan line of artists, or whether the signature is a counterfeit.

[162] *Japan* (note 117), p. 264.

Inventory number 32.317 [Illustration 45–46]

Dimension: 4,3 cm long

Dating: Early 19th century

Material: Deer horn

A recumbent ox, with his legs curled under his body, his head looking slightly upwards. The tail is pressed upwards against the animal's left thigh and there is a rope coming from a ring in its nose and going across his back. Even though this piece is not perfect in its execution, it is interesting in the natural dents and relief given by the horn used, which is visible in the lower front part of the *netsuke*. This exact composition, rope across the animal's back included, can be found in numerous variations and copies and it is clear that this particular carving is not the original, but it is one of the better looking versions. The original, where the adult animal is accompanied by a calf, was made by Tomodata and it comes from the end of 18th century. Possibly the original, or an incredibly well-executed copy, can be found in Museum of West Bohemia in Pilsner. This piece was most probably created in the beginning of 19th century.

Inventory number 32.318

Dimension: 4,7 cm long

Dating: 19th century

Material: Wood

A rat sitting on an *edamame* bean pod, grasping it with its paws. While this piece is nicely carved, with the texture of the animal's fur carved with smaller blade, it is clear that it is a copy of a different artist's work. The same exact composition can be found in various versions, with several of them signed, by different names. In some versions, the rat's eyes are inlaid with black coral and the front teeth of the animal with ivory. The first original most probably comes from the hands of Kano Tomokazu, who was active in Gifu during the first half of 19th century and who inspired many fellow carvers.[163]

[163] Reikichi (note 39), p. 302.

Inventory number 32.319

Dimension: 5 cm wide

Dating: Late 18th/ Early 19th century

Material: Ivory, black coral

Four puppies on two straw *zori* sandals. The puppies are carved in basic shapes, with no major details, except for their eyes inlaid with black coral. This motif was quite popular in *netsuke* production during late 18th and throughout 19th century. While this piece might not be of the greatest artistic skill, the way the animals' heads are rubbed smooth, it is clear that it was well-loved and worn.

Inventory number 32.321 [Illustration 49–50]

Dimension: 2,3 x 4,3 cm

Dating: Late 19th century

Material: Ivory, black coral

A group of nine rats positioned on two leaves, their limbs and tails entangled. The animals' eyes are inlaid with black coral and the piece is signed 'Masamitsu.' [164] As was mentioned before, rats were a popular subject in *netsuke*, given by their natural shape and the fact that rat is a part of the zodiac in Japan. Based on comparison with other rat pieces that bare the same signature, we can assume it was created by said author.

Inventory number 32.901

Dimension: 2,9 cm tall

Dating: Late 19th/ Early 20th century

Material: Ivory

Ebisu, one of the Seven Lucky Gods, sitting down and holding a Tai fish with both hands. Details are highlighted with drawings in black ink. This piece is almost the same as another one from Hloucha's collection, stored under the inventory number 32.301, coming from the same workshop. We can assume it was created after the Meiji revolution.

[164] Reikichi (note 39), p. 256.

Inventory number 34.116

Dimension: 4,5 x 4 cm

Dating: Early 20th century

Material: Resin

Rakan, a Buddhist disciple who reached enlightenment, with a tiger. It is almost the same as another *netsuke* in the collections of Náprstek museum, stored under the inventory number 48.209, which did not come from Joe Hloucha's collection.

8.2 MANJU *NETSUKE*

Inventory number 32.282

Dimension: 4,3 cm diameter

Dating: Early 19th century

Material: Wood, lacquer, nacre

The only *manju netsuke* in the collection, coming in pair with a three-piece *inrō*. The *inrō*depicts a natural scenery of rocks and waves, while the *netsuke* depicts a butterfly with its wings spread and three *sakura* flowers above it. Both are of great quality and there is no doubt they came from a skilled lacquer artist's workshop.

8.3 MASK *NETSUKE*

Inventory number 32.249

Dimension: 4,2 cm tall

Dating: Unknown

Material: Wood

A *hyottoko*[165] mask *netsuke* of a very nice quality. Left eyebrow is raised, while the right one is frowning in an expression of doubt of bewilderment, while the lips are skewed to the left side. Originally known from *kyogen* theatre, nowadays the modern version of this mask can be seen in various materials and quality at every fair and summer festival. Based on its smooth and skilled carving style, we can assume it was done by a professional and skilled mask carver.

[165] *Japan* (note 117), p. 1137.

Inventory number 32.254

Dimension: 4 x 3 cm

Dating: Unknown

Material: Wood

Groups of *noh* masks were quite popular as *netsuke* subjects.[166] There was no set way to compose them in the group and in this case, they are arranged as horizontally contrasting in their position. On one side, there is a *hyottoko* with a *shojo,* a sea spirit, next to it and then with *okame* and a man's mask which is frowning and has a moustache. On the other side of the *netsuke*, there is a *hannja* mask, *kagura suzu* bells and a *sambaso* hat, which are also typical in *noh* theatre. The facial features of the masks are rubbed smooth in some parts and this piece was well-worn by some patron of arts. The overall quality is quite good.

Inventory number 32.256 [Illustration 15–16]

Dimension: 4,6 cm tall

Dating: Late 18th/ Early 19th century

Material: Wood

A mask of Daikoku, one of the Seven Lucky Gods, who is the protector of crops and patron of farmers and the god of wealth and business. He is wearing a peasant hat typical for him, making him less god-like and more relatable to common folk. The face is full of life and laughing with his mouth open. It is signed as 'Deme to,' which was one of the signatures used by Deme Uman. He came from a long line of mask carvers that lived and worked in Tokyo and was active in late 18th and early 19th century.[167] Based on the overall quality, it can be assumed that it was truly carved by his hand.

Inventory number 32.280 [Illustration 30–31]

Dimension: 3,4 cm tall

Dating: Late 19th/ Early 20th century

Material: Nut, black coral

A *hyottoko* mask, when turned around, it is a kitchen fan. This type of fans cannot be folded and it is very common nowadays to produce them in the forms of various characters and faces.

[166] *Japan* (note 117), pp. 1103–1108.
[167] Reikichi (note 39), p. 220.

It is carved out of reddish-brown nut, probably walnut, while the eyes of the face are inlaid with black coral. One other, almost identical variation can be found on auction sites, but based on the great attention to detail and skill with which they must have been carved, we can be sure that both of them were produced by the same person. There is a signature 'Gyokuzan' in the back and there is no reason to believe that the signature is counterfeit. There were several carvers working under that name, with the most famous one of them gaining recognition from the Imperial house and eventually becoming a professor at the Tokyo Arts Academy upon its foundation.[168]

Inventory number 32.285 [Illustration 34–36]
Dimension: 4,5 cm tall
Dating: 19th century
Material: Wood

A mask of a fox, with a hinged movable lower jaw. It is of very good quality, with fine details. The piece is signed 'Deme Uman Tenka Ichi,' who was already mentioned before and who came from a line of famous mask carvers who lived and worked in Tokyo.[169] While the work is of very fine quality, other versions of this *netsuke* can be found, most of them bearing the same signature and being well-carved. One of them is a part of collection of Victoria and Albert Museum in London and upon comparison, we can conclude that the one in Náprstek Museum is a well-executed copy. The back of the mask is a bit wider, the ears of the fox are much rounder and there are smaller carved details missing, which points to the fact that it was not carved by the signed artist.

Inventory number 32.287
Dimension: 5,9 cm tall
Dating: Unknown
Material: Dark wood

Another fox mask with a movable lower part of its mouth, but not the whole jaw, as was the case in the previous piece. It is finely carved, with detailed hair around its nose and eyes, which have hollowed irises, making it a true miniature of a *noh* theatre mask.

[168] Reikichi (note 39), p. 226.
[169] Reikichi (note 39), p. 220.

Inventory number 32.295

Dimension: 3,7 cm tall

Dating: Unknown

Material: Wood

A *hannya* mask, which represents female character driven to becoming a demon by jealousy and despair.[170] The facial features of the mask are done in strokes that give it the feeling of movement and animosity, the inside of the mouth is cut out completely.

Inventory number 32.316

Dimension: 4,6 x 3,3 cm

Dating: 19th century

Material: Deer horn, possibly bone

A mask *netsuke* depicting a male face, with bushy eyebrows and a mouth open wide, probably in a war cry. There are details highlighted in ink. The piece is quite skilfully carved, but most probably, it was not made by a master mask carver. It is signed 'Komin,'[171] but compared to other pieces that can be found under that name, this work does not come from their workshop.

Inventory number 32.320 [Illustration 47–48]

Dimension: 3,5 cm tall

Dating:

Material: Wood, lacquer

A face of one of the Seven Lucky Gods, Daikoku, done in wood, together with a black and golden lacquer, which is peeling off in some parts. The deity's lips are painted red. This pieceis of very good quality and seems to be an original work from a skilled mask carver.

[170] *Japan* (note 117), p. 1107.
[171] Reikichi (note 39), p. 249.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully, this thesis offered an introduction to the life and work of Joe Hloucha to those who were not familiar with this traveller, author and art collector from the beginning of 20th century. Even though Japan was his long-life love and interest, he focused on other countries and cultures as well and I am sure that his person and collections offer a wide list of topics to future researchers, from Czechia, as well as from abroad. Hloucha and his work woke up almost child-like wonder and the need to learn more about Japan, its people, culture, history and, most importantly, its art, when I first picked up one of his books at a local library and I wish for this work to spark a similar interest in its readers.

The work itself was tricky and oftentimes frustrating, since the number of literary sources from which to gain the needed knowledge, is quite small and the books are hard to come by. The fact that complex books on Japanese art had only a couple of sentences, at best, to say about my field of interest, was as much frustrating as it was encouraging, for it reminded me that writing this work and making it accessible to the public and potential future researchers truly matters. The majority of publications that one can come across are auction catalogues, which oftentimes offer the reader only a basic introduction to the subject of *netsuke*, followed by tens or even hundreds of pages filled with photographs of the auctioned items. Even though these publications did not offer much of insight in the form of words, they helped me gain 'the eye' for numerous details, techniques and materials and I believe that in the end, they were a lot of help on my journey to analyse the collections at Náprstek Museum.

Such analysis as was done in this work was possible only thanks to the vast pool of information and source of images that is the Internet. Throughout my work, I compared thousands of images and bits and piece of information to lay them down into the mosaic that this work is. As to the decision to organize museum items according to their type and according to their inventory numbers, I focused on making it the least chaotic and easy to navigate as I could, since the number of analysed objects is quite large.

In the collections, I describe pieces that can be considered true gems of *netsuke* production. Hloucha, even though he was an amateur, developed a good eye to spot well-executed pieces and even those that can be considered mundane or even of poor quality, often an interesting piece of cultural and historical knowledge, that might have otherwise been lost to human

memory and time. Since *netsuke* were the art form that many townsfolk could afford throughout the *sakoku* period, and they were allowed to wear them openly, they carry an important insight into the art taste of ordinary people and not only wealthy donators of art.

Originally, this work was to focus on *inrō* from Hloucha's collection as well, since these objects often came in pairs. During the research, I found out that there is only one complete pair in the whole collection which is stored together. Other pieces did not offer any indication of being originally paired. As I was gathering information on *netsuke*, I also realized that the few comprehensive publications that I gathered, mentioned *inrō* quite a lot and talked about some of the authors, but as my work continued, I realized that my knowledge on them is lacking, compared to that of *netsuke* and the techniques used in its production. Since the number of *netsuke* themselves was quite high and they offered quite a big source of research material, I decided to focus solely on them in my thesis, leaving the *inrō* to future researchers.

The seed of this work was planted many years ago, during a guest lecture of Alice Kraemerová, PhD, at the time the curator of Japanese Collections at Náprstek Museum, at the Japanese department of Palacký University in Olomouc. Without her extensive presentation on the vastness and beauty of the collections, waiting to be researched, and her encouragement to choose a portion of these incredible collections in our future works, I might have never set upon the long journey that led to this work. The path that eventually led to this thesis took me to various different countries, departments and mentors who were willing to offer me their experienced hand. Collections of Japanese art in Europe are vast, yet the number of academic works and classes offered on this topic is quite small, as is the literature. This work hopes to encourage others to follow their call.

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50/ Netsuke, 2nd half of 19th century, ivory and black coral, 2,3 x 4,3 centimetres, Collection of National Museum - Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures,

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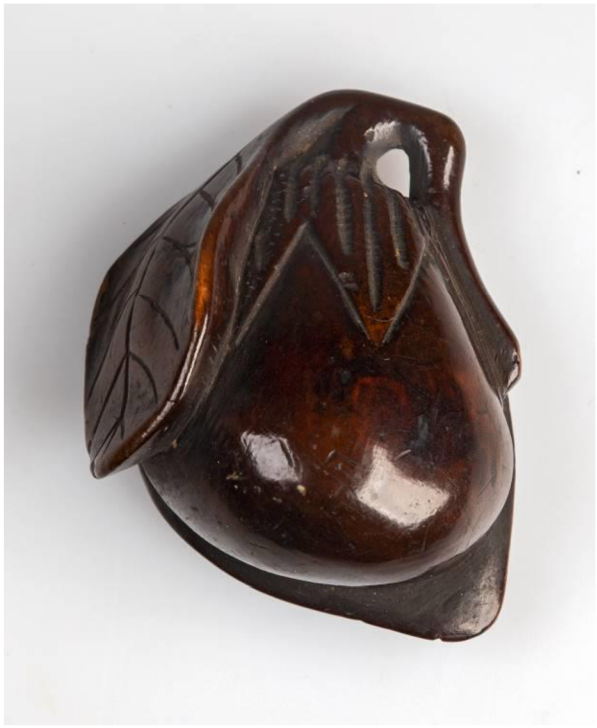
ILLUSTRATIONS



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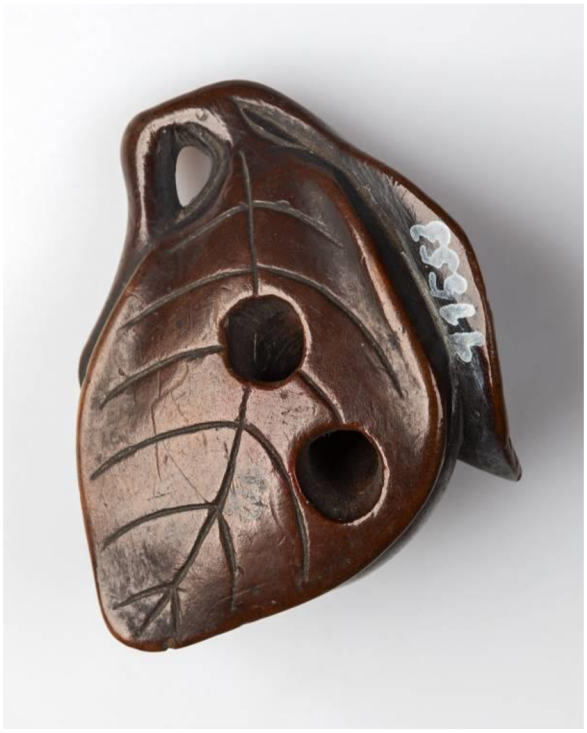

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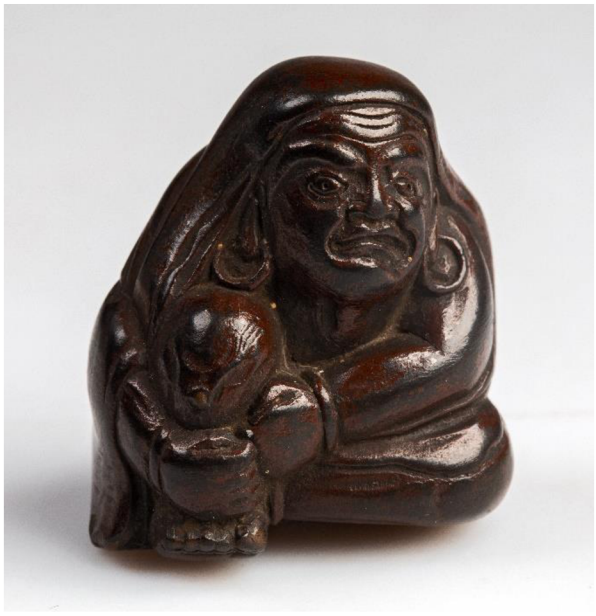

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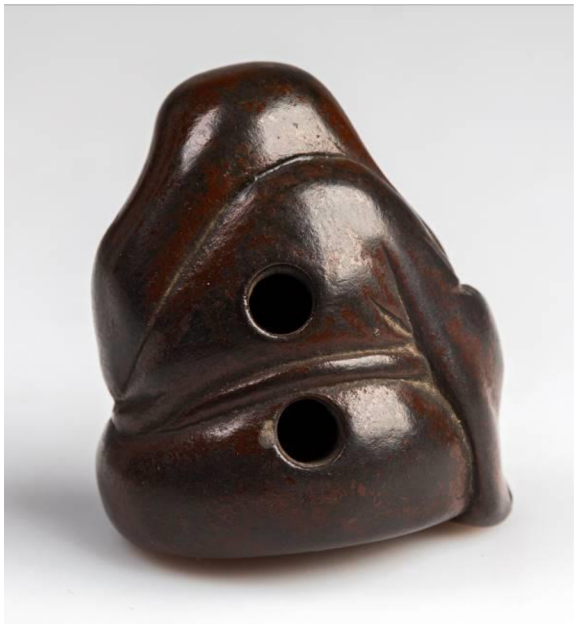

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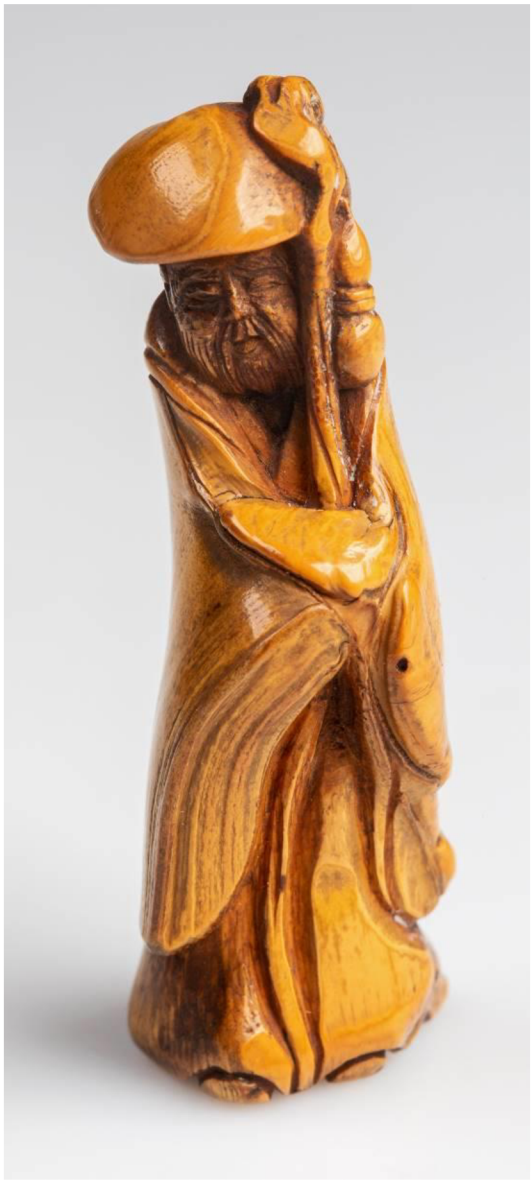

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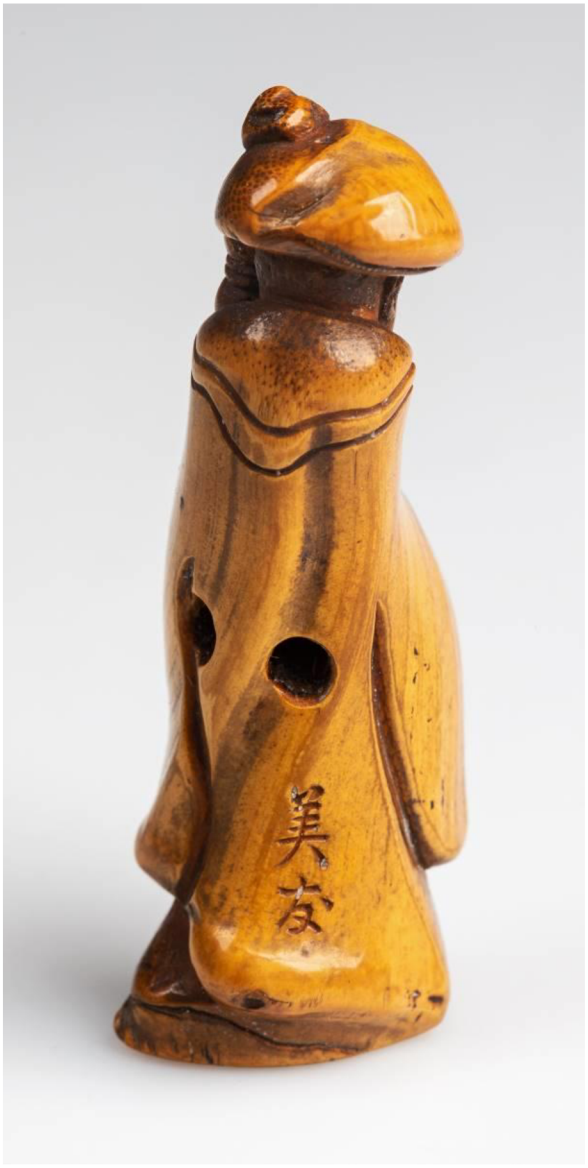

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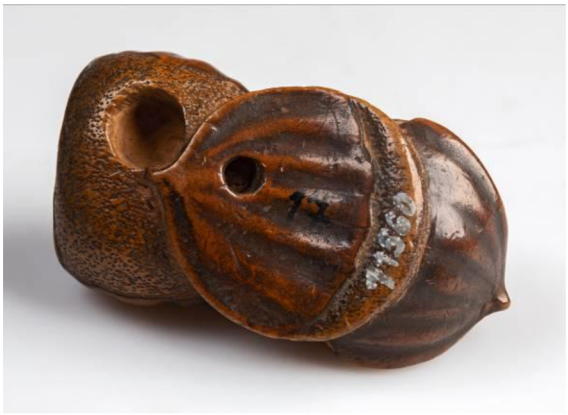

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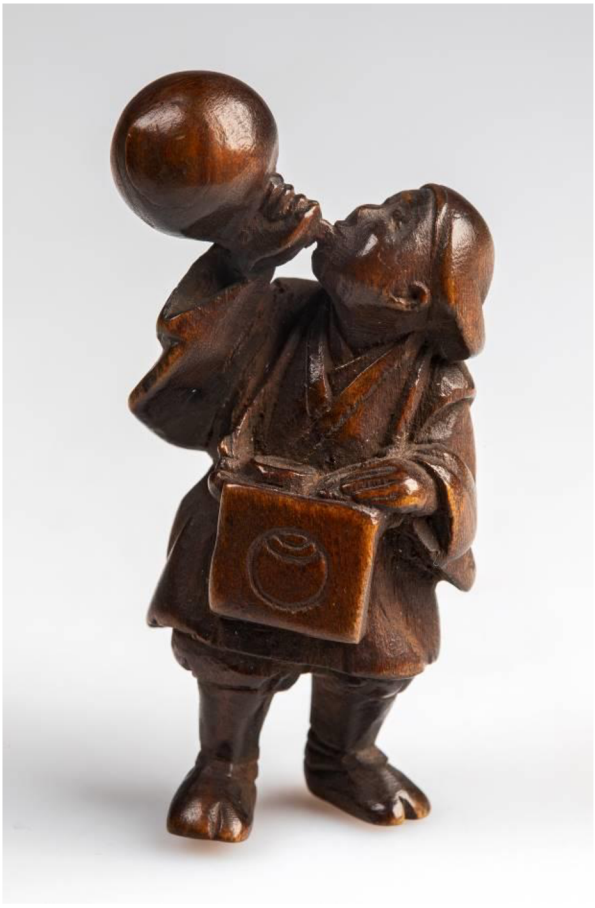

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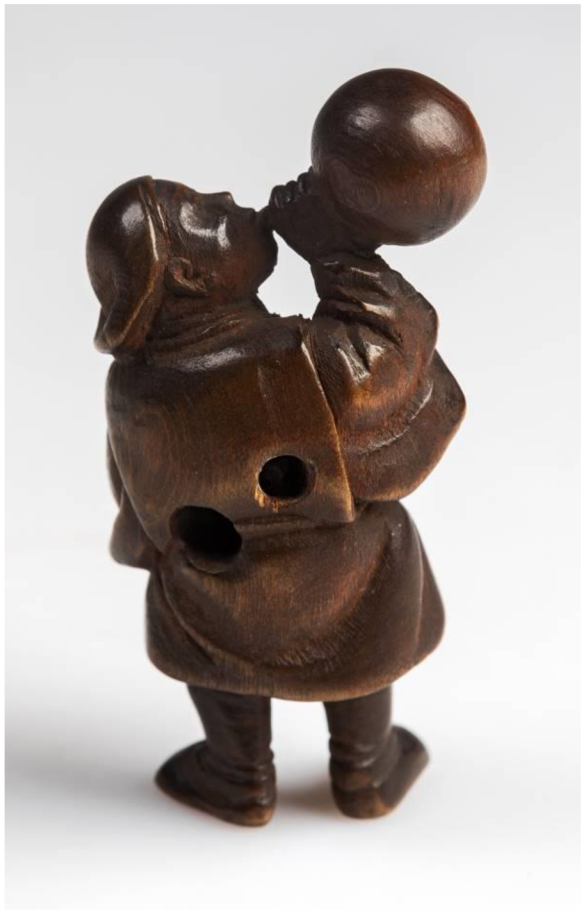

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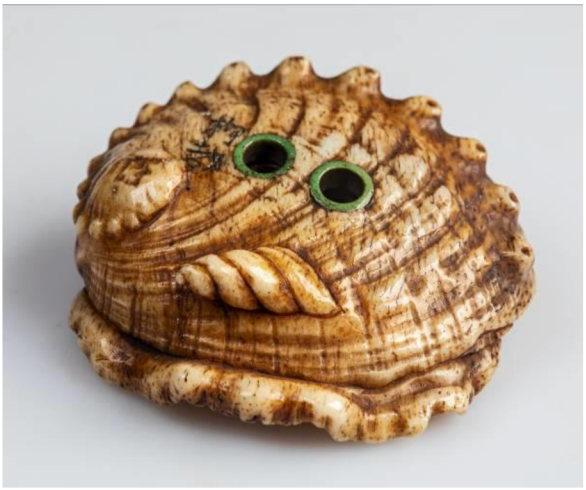

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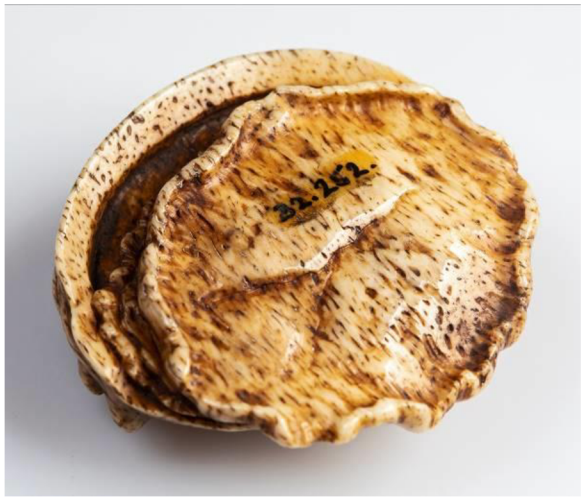

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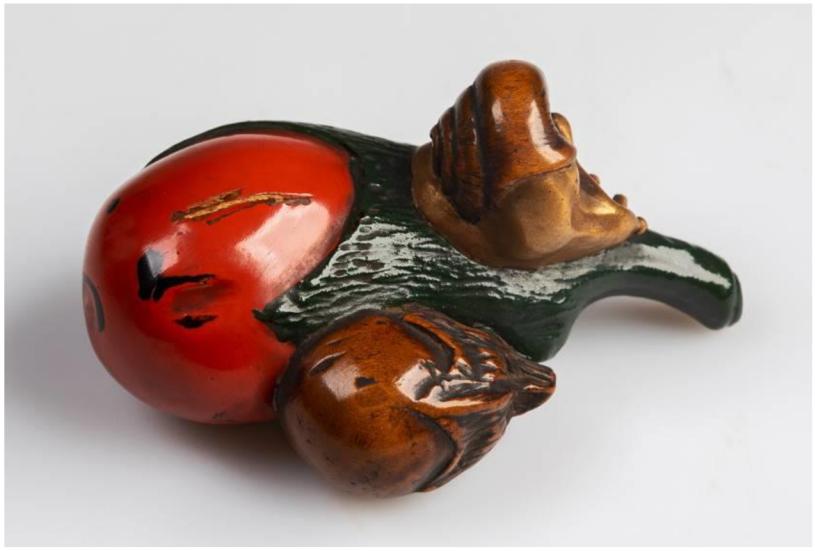

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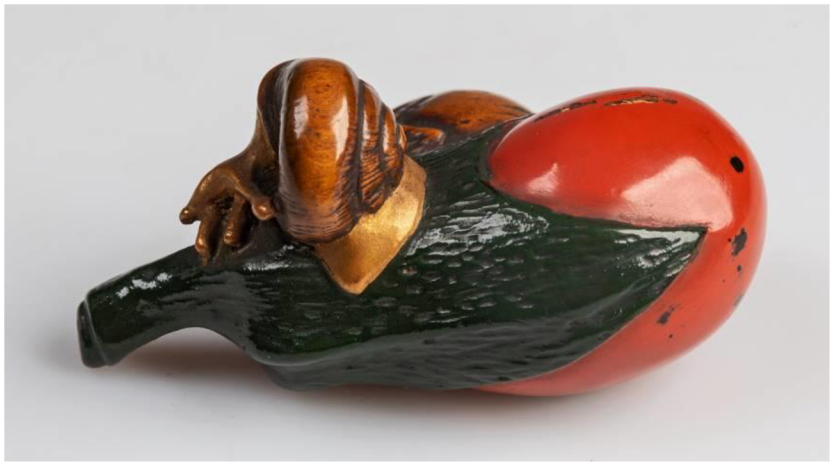

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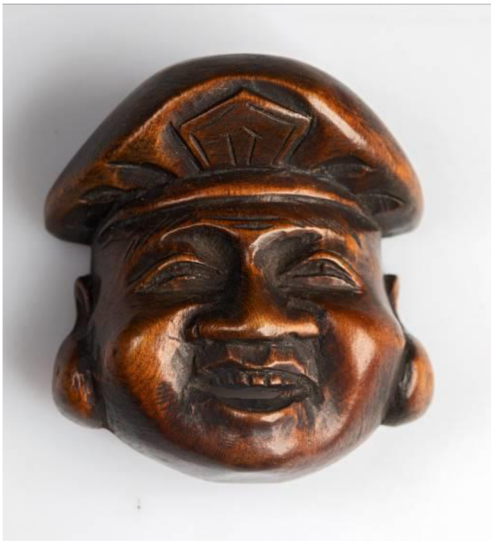

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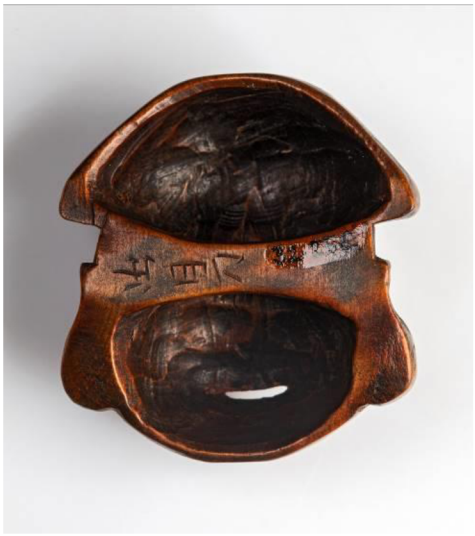

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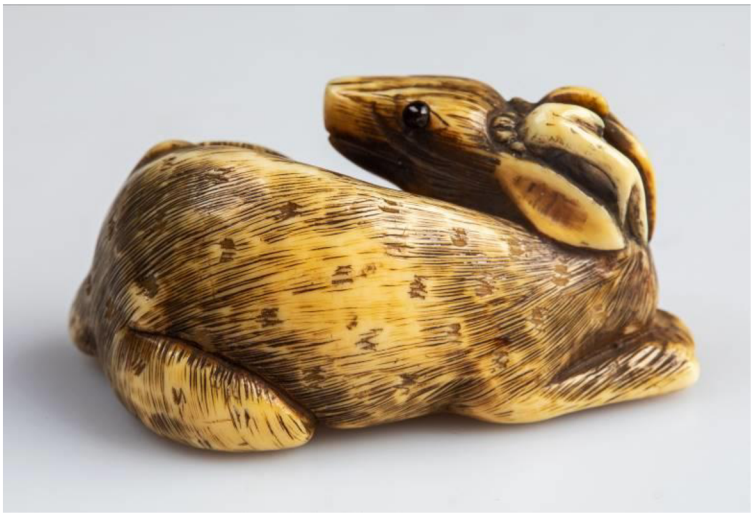

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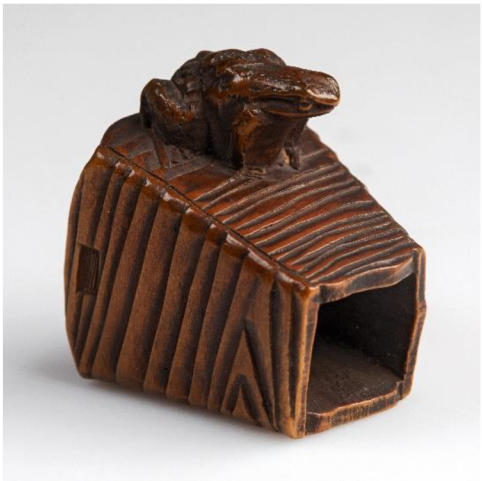

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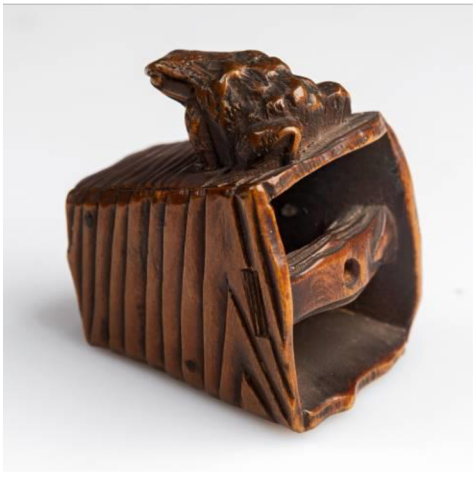

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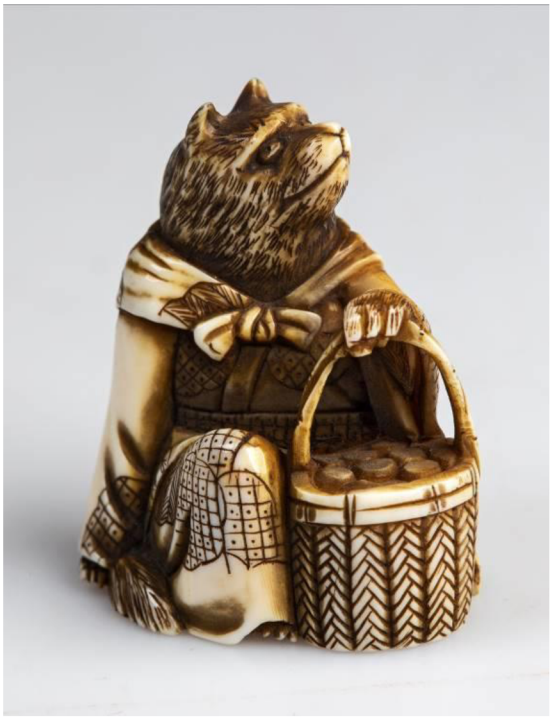

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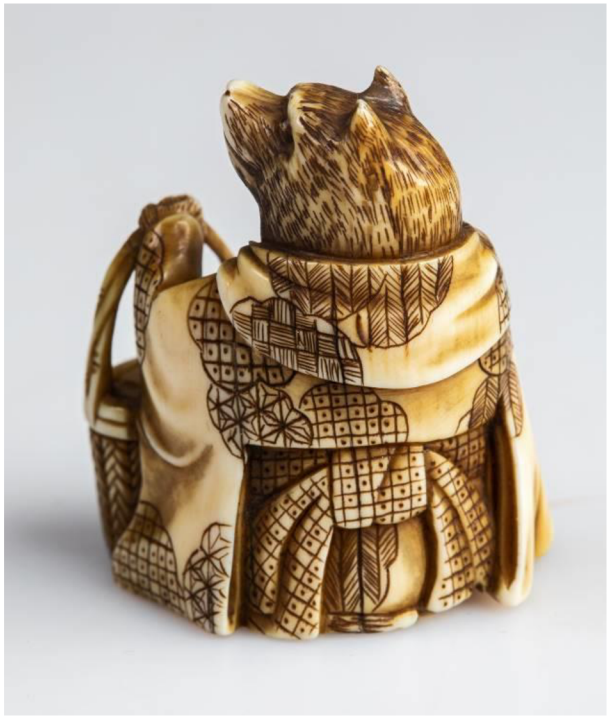

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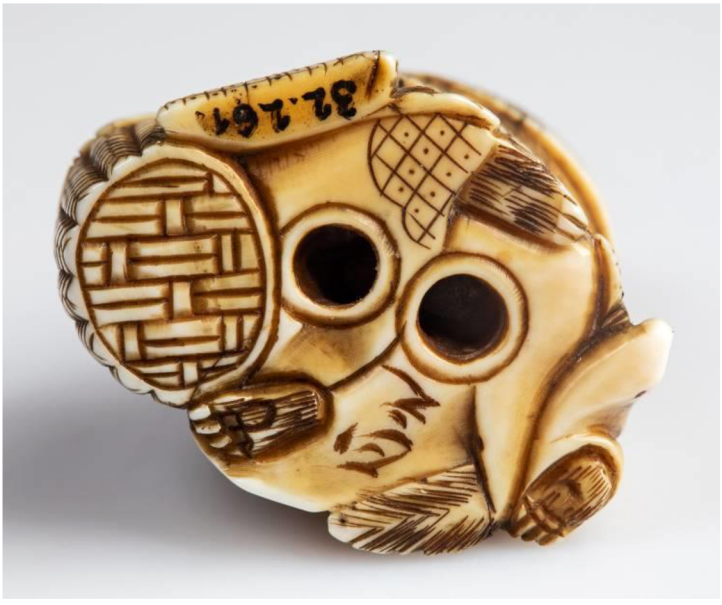

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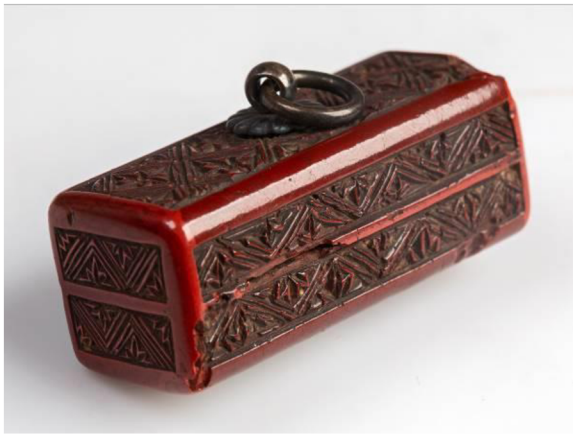

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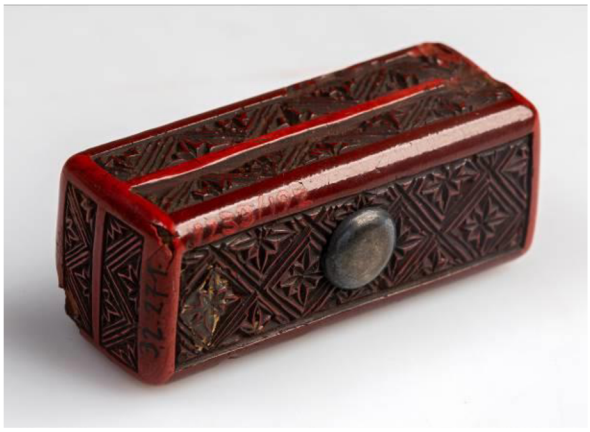

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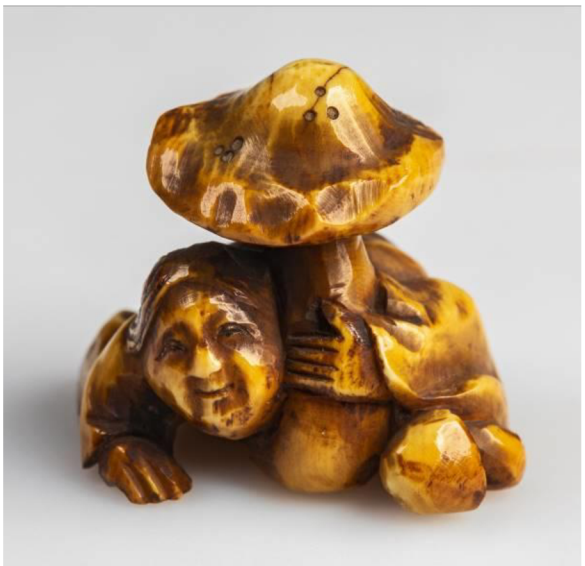

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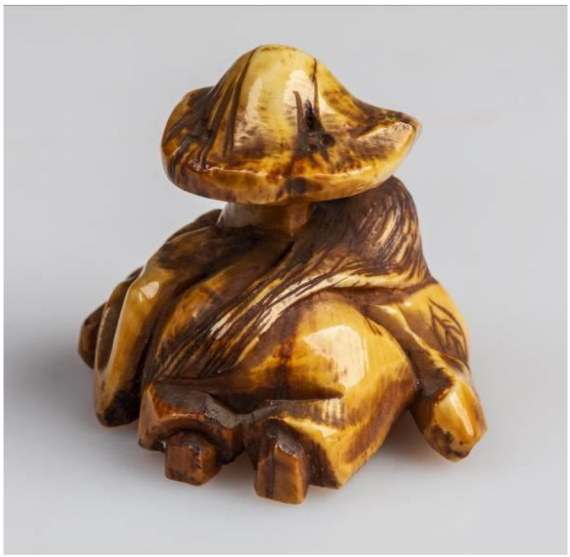
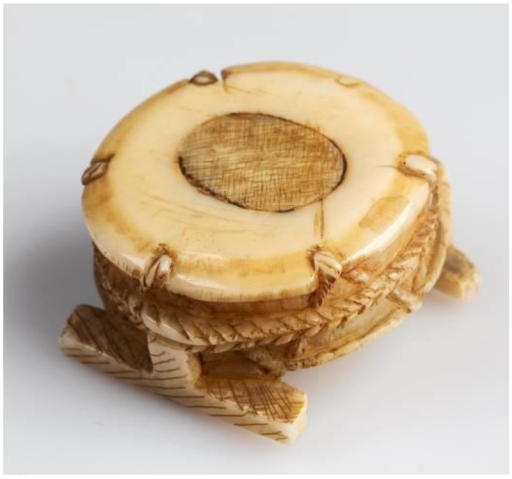
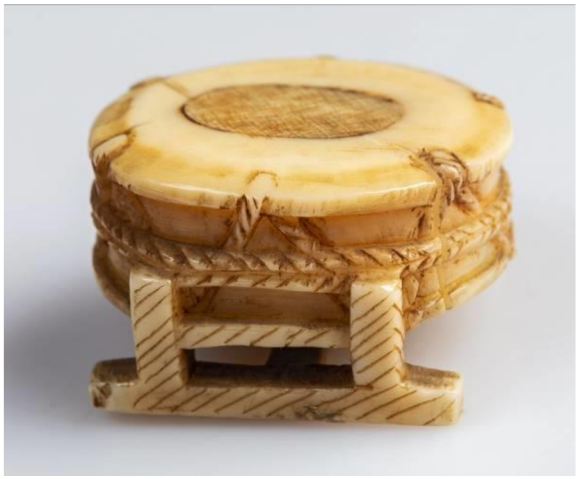


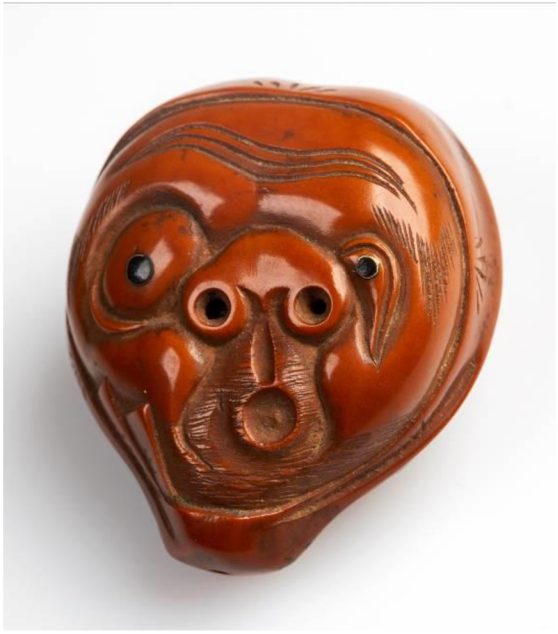
27/ Object 32.275, from the back



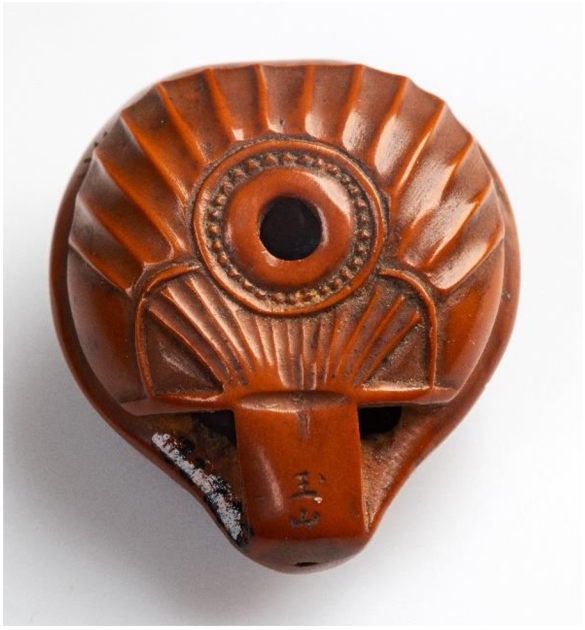
28/ Object 32.276, from the top



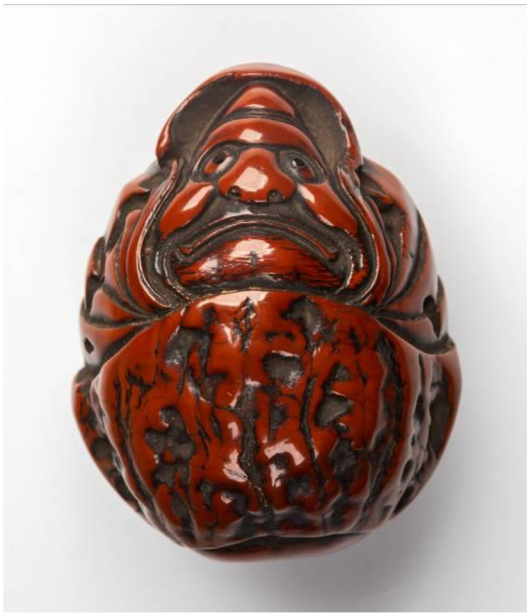
29/ Object 32.276, from the side



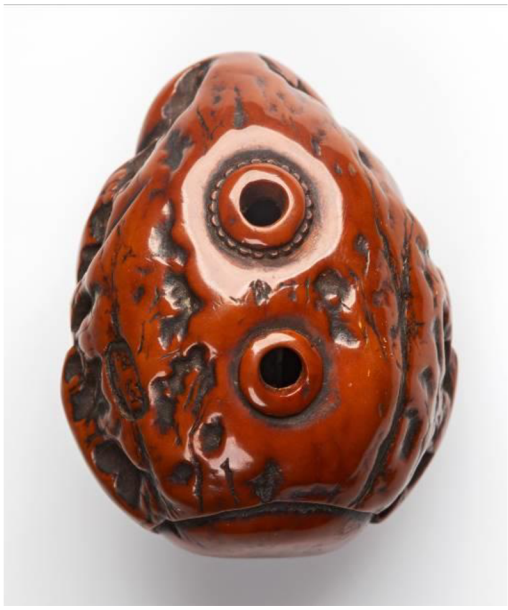
30/ Object 32.280, from the front



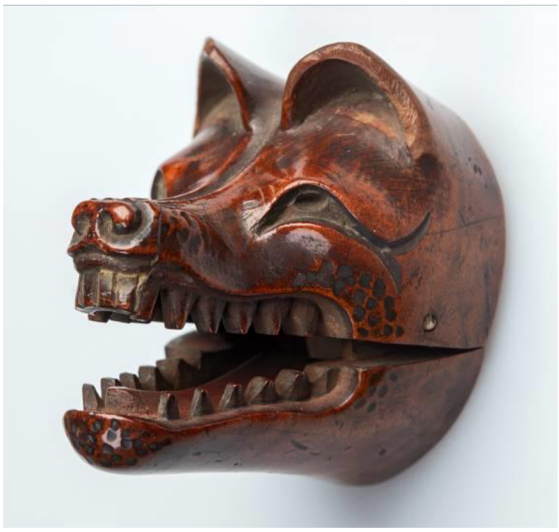
31/ Object 32.280, from the back



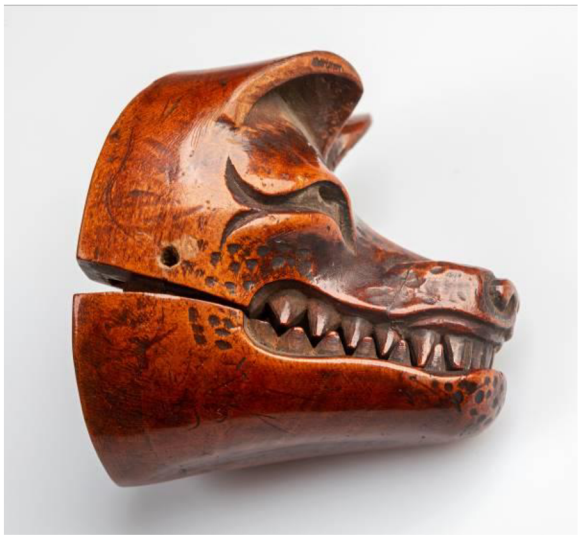
32/ Object 32.284, from the front



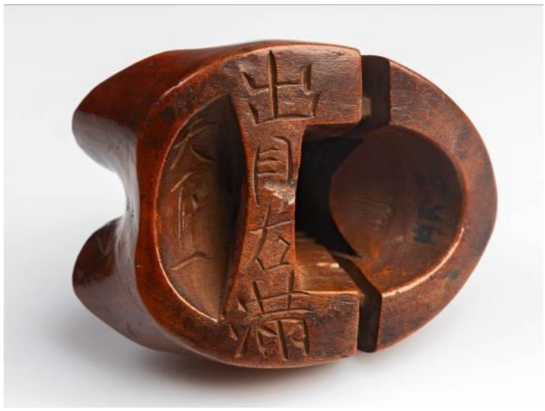
33/ Object 32.284, from the back



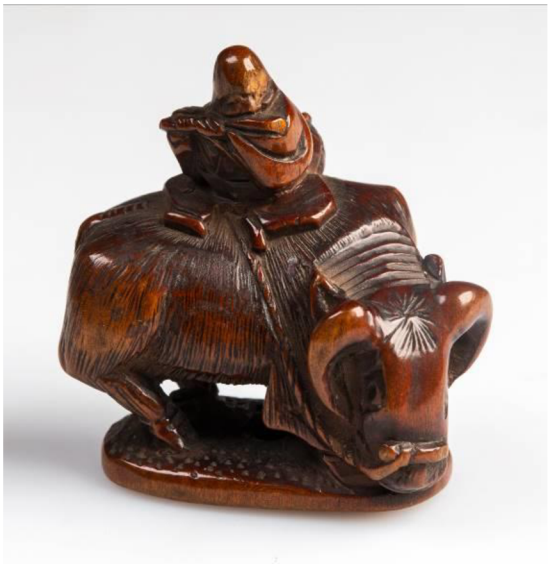
34/ Object 32.285, from the front



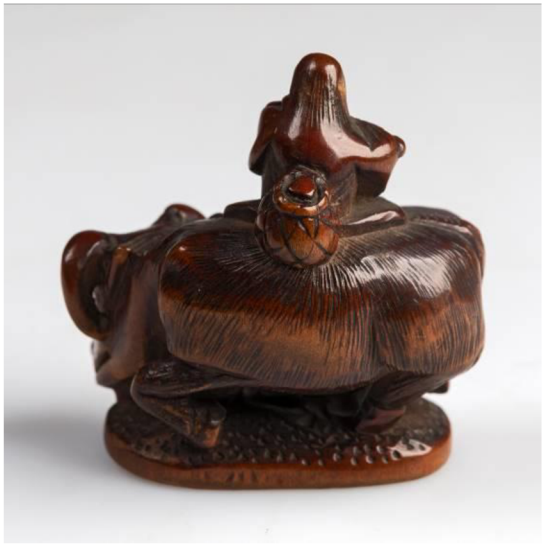
35/ Object 32.285, from the side



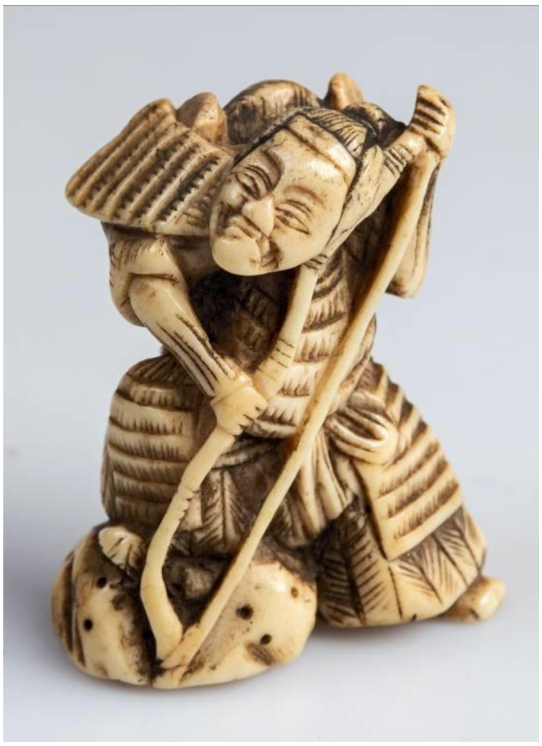
36/ Object 32.285, from the back



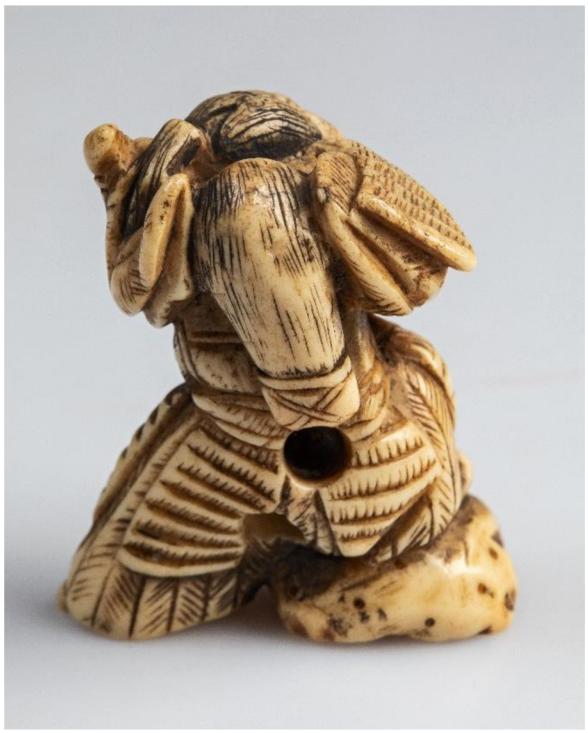
37/ Object 32.288, from the front



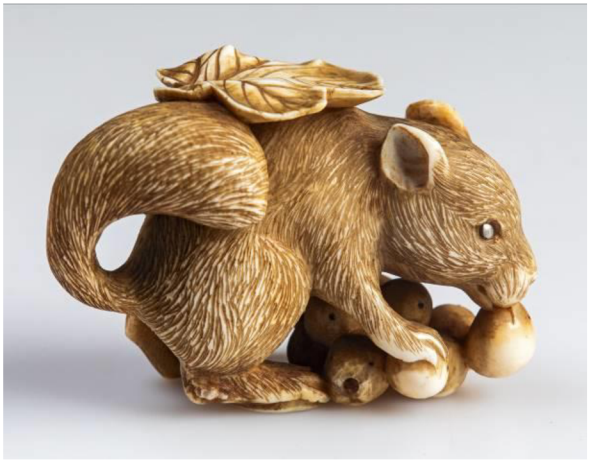
38/ Object 32.288, from the back



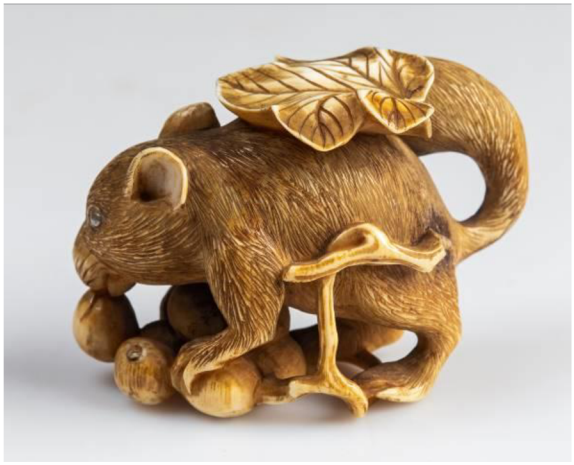
39/ Object 32.292, from the front



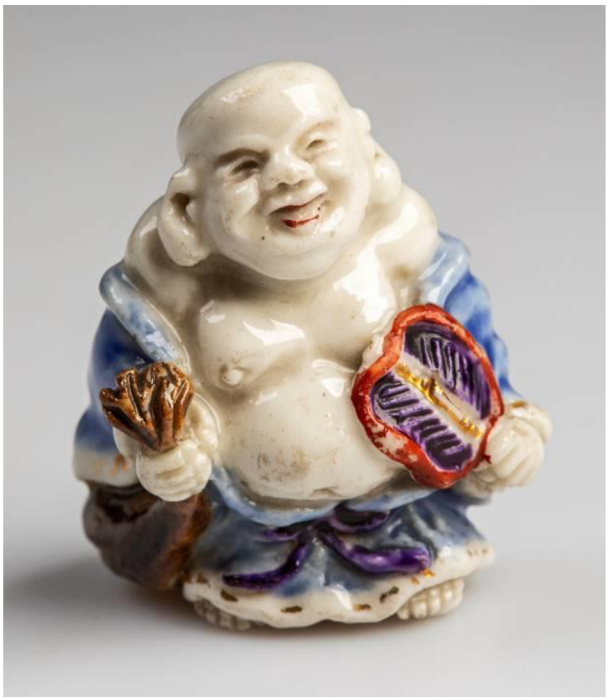
40/ Object 32.292, from the back



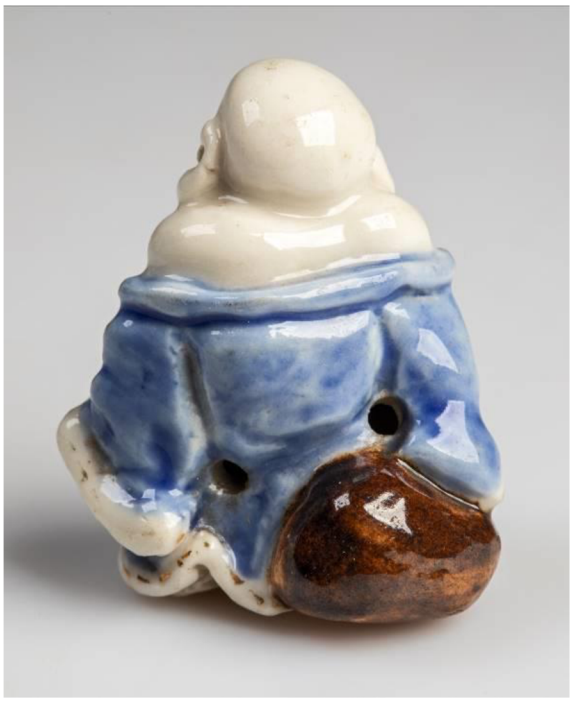
41/ Object 32.305, from the left side



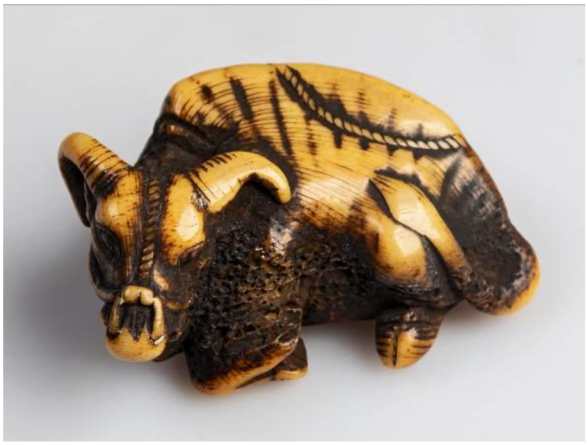
42/ Object 32.305, from the right side



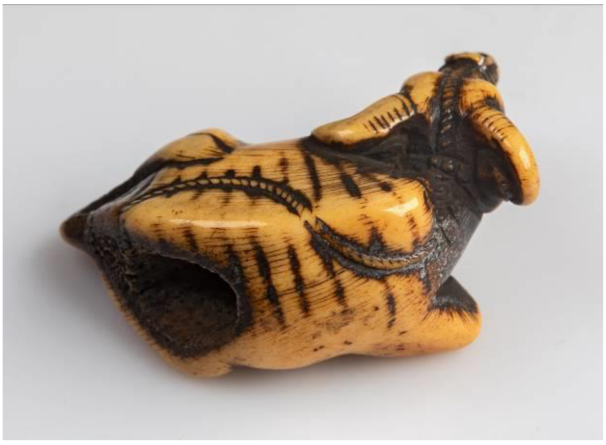
43/ Object 32.307, from the front



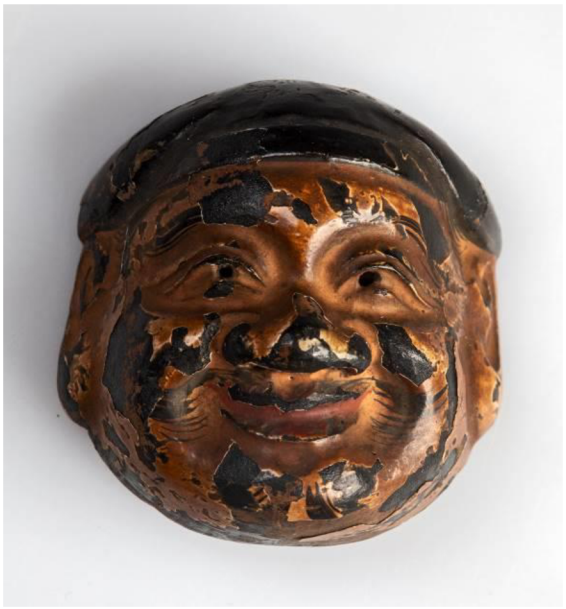
44/ Object 32.307, from the back



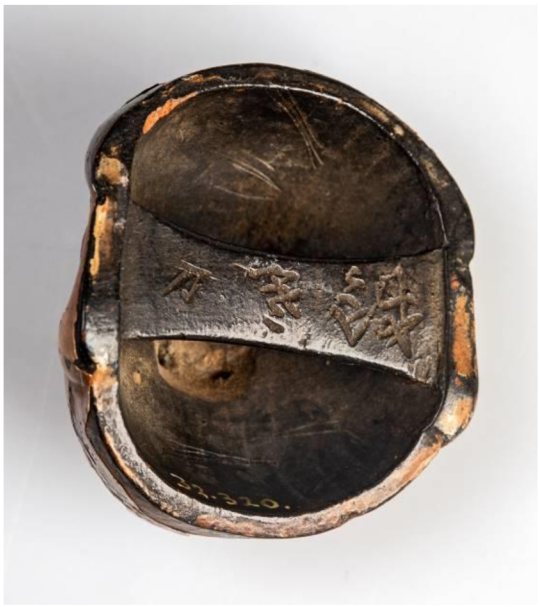
45/ Object 32.317, from the front



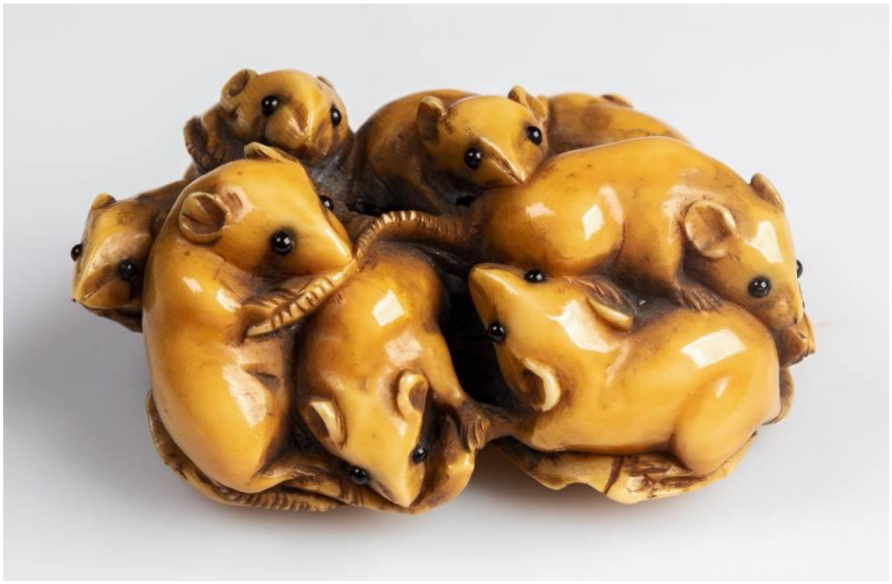
46/ Object 32.317, from the top



47/ Object 32.320, from the front



48/ Object 32.320 from the back



49/ Object 32.321, from the top

50/ Object 32.321, from the bottom

ANNOTATION

Author	Bc. Markéta Effenbergerová
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Department	Department of Art History
Supervisor	doc. PhDr. Tomáš Winter, Ph.D.
Title of the thesis	Netsuke from Joe Hlouha's Collection at Náprstek Museum in Prague
Title of the thesis in Czech	Necuke ze sbírek Joe Hlouchy v Náprstkově muzeu v Praze
Annotation of the thesis	A Master thesis focusing on *netsuke* in the Japanese collections of Náprstek museum in Prague, namely the ones that came to the museum from Joe Hloucha, a traveller, writer and an amateur art collector active in the first half of 20th century. A chapter of the work is dedicated to Hloucha, his work and his life and the contribution to the field of Japanese studies. Second chapter deals with the history of *netsuke* and their development throughout centuries. Third chapter focuses on what makes a true *netsuke* and the requirements these small accessories need to meet. Fourth chapter deals with their types, the fifth with the materials used in their production and the sixth one dives into the most common subjects that can be found. Seventh chapter talks about the problem of authorship in *netsuke* and the eight one focuses on the analysis of the collections themselves.
Annotation of the thesis in Czech	Magisterská práce věnující se *necuke* v japonských sbírkách Náprstkova muzea v Praze, konkrétně předmětům původně pocházejícím ze sbírek Joe Hlouchy, Českého cestovatele, spisovatele a amatérského sběratele umění a japanologa, který působil v první polovině 20. století. První kapitola se věnuje Hlouchovi, jeho životu, dílu a přínosu oboru japanistiky. Druhá kapitola se zabývá historií *necuke* a jejich vývoji napříč stoletími. Třetí kapitola se věnuje otázce, co je správné *necuke* a jaké požadavky musí jeho tvůrce při jejich výrobě splnit. Čtvrtá kapitola se zabývá nejobvyklejšími typy *necuke*, pátá potom materiály, které byly nejčastěji používány při jejich výrobě. Šestá kapitola se věnuje námětům, které se v *necuke* objevují a sedmá kapitola problematice autenticity a autorství. Osmá kapitola se zabývá samotnými předměty ve sbírce muzea a jejich analýze.
Number of pages	112

Number of characters in the main text, including breaks	166 601
Number of pictures attached	50
Key words	Náprstek Museum, Joe Hloucha, netsuke, miniature sculpture, Japan, Nippon, Japanese art, Japanese art history, Japanese sculpture, Japanese fashion, fashion accessories, Japanese studies, museums, museum collections, Japanese collections in Europe
Language of the thesis	English