



# Recent Asian Acquisitions

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1 *Somāskanda*  
India (Tamil Nadu), c. twelfth century  
Bronze, height 47.1 cm, width 64.5 cm

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Somāskanda is the term used to describe a composition that depicts the Hindu god Śiva and his consort Umā seated on a throne with their infant son Skanda between them. This way of representing the divine family is peculiar to Southeast India, where it appears around the seventh century CE carved into the back wall of the sanctum of Śiva temples (L'Hernault; Lockwood). About two centuries later, stone reliefs of Somāskanda ceased to be produced, following the introduction of a new artistic and architectural style associated with the rise of the Chola dynasty (ninth-thirteenth century CE). Instead, due to changes in the liturgy, bronze images intended as processional icons (Skt. *utsavamūrti*) were created on a large scale. Their production reached its peak towards the end of the Chola period when each Śiva temple had to have at least one bronze Somāskanda to be carried through the streets of the town during temple festivals. The round holes in the base visible here were used to fasten the statues on to a palanquin or a processional chariot.

As in the case of other South Indian bronzes, this Somāskanda does not have an inscription that would facilitate its dating. However, several stylistic features shared with other images of the late Chola period, such as Śiva's individually marked and symmetrically arranged strings of hair, his broad shoulders, the jewellery worn by the deities and the position and shape of the attributes, allow us to place it somewhere towards

the end of the twelfth century. Indeed, the sculpture is very similar to the Somāskanda at the Thanjavur Art Gallery (inv. no. 112; Ślaczka 2013, fig. 5), originally from Patteeswaram in the Thanjavur District, and dated to around the twelfth century.

The Somāskanda has previously been exhibited in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, the Dallas Museum of Art and the Cleveland Museum of Art during the iconic exhibition *The Sensuous and the Sacred* (Dehejia). The fact that the statue is complete with all three figures intact and in good condition is certainly remarkable: in many similar examples the small figure of Skanda is missing. In the Rijksmuseum, the Somāskanda as a major theme in South Indian art complements the Natarāja (Śiva as the King of the Dancers), whose monumental late Chola bronze has been part of the collection since 1935.

AS

LITERATURE:

- H. Munsterberg, *Sculpture of the Orient*, New York 1972, pl. 24  
M. Lockwood et al., *Mahabalipuram Studies*, Madras 1974  
F. L'Hernault, *L'Iconographie de Subrahmanya au Tamilnad*, Pondicherry 1978  
V. Dehejia, *The Sensuous and the Sacred: Chola Bronzes from South India*, New York 2003, p. 126, pl. 16  
A.A. Ślaczka, 'De familie van Shiva in het Rijksmuseum', *Aziatische Kunst* 43 (June 2013), no. 2, pp. 14-20

PROVENANCE:

- Doris Wiener Collection, New York (before 1972-2012);  
purchased with the support of the BankGiro Loterij, 2012  
(inv. no. AK-RAK-2012-1).

2 Set of *mukozuke*

Delft, c. 1660-1720

Tin-glazed earthenware (faience), each approx. 6.5 x 7.5 x 7.5 cm

Much has been written about the influence of Asian porcelain on the development of tin-glazed earthenware. However in 1667 the Delft city chronicler Dirck van Bleywijck pointed out the opposite phenomenon, 'Zelfs Oostindien, daar anders het aller fynste van daan komt tracht zelfs met deze Delftse waren te pronken' ('Even people from the East Indies, whence otherwise the very finest come, themselves endeavour to show off with these Delft wares'). This set of five bowls is a rare example of Delft tin-glazed earthenware made for Japan.

The square shape does not occur in Delftware for the western market, but it is customary for *mukozuke*: small boxes or dishes used during the *kaiseki* meal before the tea ceremony. The bowls were based on Japanese ceramics or wooden models that found their way to Delft aboard Dutch East India Company (VOC) vessels. The subdued floral decorations with insect and bird motifs were also adapted to the Japanese taste. The design echoes similar motifs on Japanese porcelain dating from around 1650-80.

A fashion for using exotic foreign objects during the tea ceremony had already existed in Japan since the sixteenth century. Chinese porcelain and Korean pottery were favoured, but European ceramics were used as well. The Dutch had tried to market European stoneware and earthenware in Japan as early as 1634. The VOC archives show that European ceramics were regularly imported at the special request of high-ranking Japanese. These *mukozuke* must be seen in the light of such special orders. Two very similar sets in the Nezu Institute of Fine Arts in Tokyo and in a Japanese private collection were probably ordered at the same time as this set.

In the nineteenth century the set was owned by Hayashi Ryoeki, a doctor who worked at the shogun's court. Ryoeki was a collector and a practitioner of the tea ceremony, but would also have received gifts for treatments he carried out. The set and the accompanying wooden box may have been made for him.

FD

## LITERATURE:

- H. Nishida, *Oranda. European Ceramics Imported into Japan during the Edo Period*, Tokyo (Nezu Institute of Fine Arts) 1987, nos. 56 and 57  
 K. Corrigan et al., *Asia in Amsterdam: The Culture of Luxury in the Golden Age*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum)/Salem (Peabody Essex Museum), 2015-16, no. 31

## PROVENANCE:

- Hayashi Ryoeki (1787-1846); Urokoya Yokoi shoten, Nagoya; purchased with the support of the Fonds de Zuidroute/Rijksmuseum Fonds, 2015 (inv. no. BK-2015-55).



## 3 SUIBOKUAN YUSHIN (active c. 1820s)

Incense box with camellia, from the series *Seven Utensils for the Incense Competition*, 1829  
 Colour woodcut; line block in black with colour blocks, metal pigments, mica, embossing,  
 186 x 214 mm

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The Goslings NieuwBeerta Fonds is the main Rijksmuseum fund with which Japanese prints may be purchased. It is intended for prints appropriate to the collection Jan Willem Goslings (1943-2011) and his wife gifted to the Rijksmuseum together with the fund. This means that it is chiefly used to buy *surimono* (privately commissioned prints) and *shunga* (erotic prints) and Japanese prints closely allied to these two themes.

*Surimono* are luxurious prints that were made on special occasions as gifts for friends and relatives, for example as New Year's gifts. They were printed with expensive pigments on thick paper. The image in a *surimono* is always linked to one or more poems that are printed as part of the black line block and are often full of wordplay. A *surimono* is the end result of the collaboration between the print artist and the poet, where the combination of word and image forms an entertaining, yet sometimes difficult to fathom, game.

Four *surimono* have been purchased by the fund since 2014. One by the print artist Suibokuan Yushin and a set of three by Yashima Gakutei (see acquisition 4). The *surimono* by Suibokuan is a still life with a three-coloured incense box, a falcon's feather and a camellia in bloom. The print bears the series title *Seven Utensils for the Incense Competition* and each of the different attributes is part of this competition. The ox sleeping on the lid of the incense box alludes to the superstition that stroking an ox, sleeping on cushions, would bring good luck. The ox also refers to 1829, the year in which this *surimono* was published. The two poems, one of which was composed by the print artist himself, refer to that same year. A striking feature of this print is the exotic border reminiscent of gold or copper fittings. The print was superbly printed with metal pigments, embossing and mica and is a real acquisition for the *surimono* collection.

MJ

## LITERATURE:

J.B. Mirviss and J.T. Carpenter, *Jewels of Japanese Printmaking: Surimono of the Bunka-Bunsei Era 1804-1830*, exh. cat. Tokyo (Ôta Memorial Museum of Art) 2000, pp. 162-63

## PROVENANCE:

Purchased with the support of the Goslings NieuwBeerta Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds, 2014  
 (inv. no. RP-P-2014-76).



## 4 YASHIMA GAKUTEI (1786-1868)

*Hikaru Genji, Captain Sagoromo and Narihira Ason*, in the set *Three Gentlemen of Japanese Literature*, 1819-20.

Colour woodcut; line block in black with colour blocks, metal pigments and embossing, 181 x 207 mm

The three prints by the print artist Yashima Gakutei make up the set of *Three Gentlemen of Japanese Literature*. They portray the main figures from three major works of Japanese classical literature, all three in the company of a lady. On the left of each scene there are two poems depicted in cartouches in the form of poetry slips.

The first print depicts a scene from the *Tale of Genji*, written at the beginning of the eleventh century by the celebrated lady-in-waiting and writer Murasaki Shikibu (fl. c. 1000). The book describes the life and the amorous escapades of the elegant main character, Prince Genji, and in general is regarded as the first great novel in world literature. Genji, who among other things was highly skilled in the art of calligraphy and poetry, is shown here with a lady-in-waiting, while they gain inspiration as they sit on a veranda looking out over a garden.

The second print in the set depicts a scene from the *Tale of Sagoromo*. This novel was written around 1070 and is attributed to the lady-in-waiting Senji (fl. c. 1050). The book tells the story of Sagoromo, a handsome aristocrat, and his unrequited love. We see the main character as he plays the flute at the request of the emperor. His music is so extraordinary and beautiful that a goddess appears.

The third print features the poet Narihira Ason (c. 825-880). Narihira was long regarded as the author of the famous *Tales of Ise*, a tenth-century collection of poems and associated narratives about the amorous life of an anonymous man. It has now become clear that this work is a collection from various sources, including the work of the poet. The print shows Narihira listening to the music coming from the *koto* played by a lady-in-waiting. The golden clouds and the zigzag fencing indicate that the poet is outside the garden and the two cannot see one another.

It is unusual to find this set complete and in such good condition. Jan Willem Goslings had eleven prints by Gakutei in his original collection and this set is therefore a fine addition to it.

MJ

## LITERATURE:

J.T. Carpenter (ed.), *Reading Surimono: The Interplay of Text and Image in Japanese Prints*, Leiden/Boston 2008, p. 150

## PROVENANCE:

Purchased with the support of the Goslings NieuwBeerta Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds, 2014

(inv. nos. RP-P-2014-37-1 to 3).



和書三好子

光源氏

岳亭

春は興あれや柿の青表あさねをうらむる海内幸と

文雅園

辛元

をさきりらぬあまうてわむよまのひそくこれぬまの曙

文々舎





お書三好子  
校衣大将

岳亭

宮入りもはかりくさきうらふ年の花のけほほまきまのゆくらぬ

音我舟  
藤丸

苗の音とる人さきくさきうらふ年の花のけほほまきまのゆくらぬ

音我園  
真砂子



身ノ稀ニキミノ深モあハ鳥ヤキノヒノクマノ極  
 少ニ舎  
 足成

ほくろの深も門工くそそめくそくまのくけきま信ハ筆  
 かき

- 5 KATSUSHIKA HOKUSAI (1760-1849)  
*Sangi Takamura* (Ono no Takamura), from the series *One Hundred Poems Explained by the Wet Nurse*, published by Iseya Sanjirō in 1835-36  
 Colour woodcut, 378 x 265 mm

Although Katsushika Hokusai designed countless *surimono*, this spectacular print is not one of them. Thanks to the combination of poetry and image, however, it was possible to purchase this woodcut from the Goslings NieuwBeerta Fonds. Three female divers are at work in a choppy sea. Splashing through the waves, they bring dived abalone to a rowing boat in which three men sit. The man in front seizes the shells, the one in the middle lays them carefully in a basket and the man behind ensures that the boat does not drift too far in the turbulent water. Three other women sitting on a jagged rock catch their breath before the next dive.

There is a poem by Ono no Takamura (802-852) in the square yellow cartouche upper right. This celebrated poet was exiled to the Eighty Islands and wrote this poem on the eve of his departure:

Through the wide, wide sea/ Towards its many distant isles/ Rowing I set forth/ This, to all the world proclaim/ O ye boats of fisher-folk! (translation by C. MacCauley in P. Morse 1989).

This print comes from one of Hokusai's most famous print series, *One Hundred Poems Explained by the Wet Nurse*. In this series Hokusai depicts poems from the popular poetry anthology *One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets*, compiled in the thirteenth century from poems dating from the seventh to the thirteenth century.

Hokusai was at his peak as a landscape artist. However his approach to Japan's best known poems was atypical in that he combined classical court poetry with contemporary landscapes in which ordinary people often feature in everyday scenes. And although the link between text and image sometimes seems tenuous at first, much can be explained by the complex wordplay that is an important part of the poems. At the same time Hokusai himself also added a humorous twist by having the wet nurse of the series title, unfamiliar with the classical world of court nobility, explain the popular poems in her own way.

The joke in this print revolves around the Japanese word *ama*, which is referred to as 'fisher-folk' in the poem, but which Hokusai has the wet



nurse wrongly interpret as 'pearl divers' (the same pronunciation 'ama', but a different Japanese character).

This print, which is considered one of the best of the series, is a magnificent addition to the three other designs from this series in the Rijksmuseum's collection.

MJ



LITERATURE:

- J.P. Filedt Kok (ed.), *Hokusai and his School: Japanese Prints, c. 1800-1840*, Amsterdam 1982, pp. 53-54  
 M. Forrer, *Hokusai*, New York 1988, pp. 340-46  
 R. Lane, *Hokusai: Life and Work*, New York 1989, no 284, pp. 228-30  
 P. Morse, *Hokusai: One Hundred Poets*, New York 1989  
 M. Forrer, *Hokusai: Prints and Drawings*, exh. cat. London (Royal Academy of Arts) 1991, pp. 30-31

PROVENANCE:

- Purchased with the support of the Goslings NieuwBeerta Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds, 2015  
 (inv. no. RP-P-2015-8).

6 HASHIMOTO SEISUI (Hiroshima 1876-1943)  
*Green Pine Trees against White Sand*  
 Japan, 1913-14  
 Ink and colour on silk, 198.3 x 83.8 cm

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Hashimoto Seisui depicted the arched trunks of the pine trees isolated against the background of a white beach, further emphasizing their individual shapes by showing them from a high viewpoint. The composition with separate components thus created is in the tradition of Rinpa, a school of painters and craftsmen founded in Kyoto in the early seventeenth century. They generated a new pictorial language by grouping polished, painted, stylized elements in a decorative composition. Seisui's painting calls to mind a pair of screens featuring the Matsushima Islands by Tawaraya Sotatsu (?-c. 1640), on which stylized pine trees are placed individually against a light background. It is possible that Seisui wanted to refer back to Sotatsu, but it could also be that he was depicting Amanohashidate, where pine trees fill a peninsula with a white beach. In both cases he followed the Rinpa tradition, in which famous places of natural beauty were a popular theme.

Seisui was a pupil of Hashimoto Gaho (1835-1908), who was present at the founding of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts (Tokyo Bijutsu Gakko), the art academy set up by the Japanese government in 1889. As a teacher Gaho was responsible

for training many prominent artists from the Nihonga, the collective name of a movement in which artists who worked with traditional Japanese materials and techniques were gathered. Seisui was also a proponent. He initially worked in the Kano-related style of his teacher, but later broke away to formulate his own style. He was one of those who gave the Rinpa tradition a fresh, modern impact, like Kamisaka Sekka (1866-1942), who did the same for printmaking. In 1914 Seisui exhibited this large work at the first Inten, the annual exhibitions staged by the Japan Art Institute (Nihon Bijutsuin), which was set up by the circles around the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and organized exhibitions to encourage innovation in Japanese art.

MF

LITERATURE:

*Taishoki, saiko inten no kaqayaki*, exh. cat. Tokyo (Shiga kenritsu Kindai Bijutsukan/Tochigi Kenritsu Bijutsukan) 2009, pp. 176-77, 187, no. 239

PROVENANCE:

Purchased with a contribution from the B.J. Peiser Bequest, 2015 (inv. no. AK-RAK-2015-1).

