

In the early 17th century, the Japanese musical instrument, the *samisen*, became popular. The plectrum (*bachi*) was made of ivory, and triangular remnants of the tusk were used for making netsuke, although this material was usually of inferior quality. However, ivory was not commonly used until the late 18th century, at which time it started to be imported from India by way of China and Korea. The first well-known carver in ivory was Ogasawara Issai (late 18th century). The sculptors of Buddhist images, who used mainly wood, similarly carved netsuke in wood. The Nara doll carvers also carved wooden netsuke which they brightly colored. They often used a faceted type of carving called *itto-bori*. The carvers of Noh masks developed the miniature mask netsuke. The earliest mask netsuke were attributed to either Deme Eiman (died 1705) or Akamasa or Aka-matsu. This famous Deme school of mask carvers flourished during the last part of the 17th century, the most famous being Deme Uman (Suke-mitsu), who worked for the shogun in Edo, and Deme Joman (Taka-mitsu). Both carved mask netsuke solely in wood. Their works are usually signed.

Metalworkers chiseled the metal disks for the buttonlike netsuke called *kagamibuta*. This type probably preceded the figure netsuke. Yokoya Somin (1669-1733), a metal carver of Edo, engraved *kagamibuta* during this era. The end of this era included such famous artists as the lacquerer and painter Ogata Korin (1658-1716) and the lacquerer and ceramist Ogawa Ritsuo (1663-1747), both of whom occasionally made netsuke.