

**“ Folk Toys and Votive Placards:  
Frederick Starr and the Ethnography of Collector Networks in Taisho Japan”**

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That the Japanese are impersonal is a trite and commonplace observation. It is true that to an extraordinary degree, they are non-individual, impersonal, and given to acting as a group rather than individuals . . . It is, however, also true, and not inconsistent with this quality of impersonality, that the Japanese are to an extraordinary degree free and untrammelled in their tastes and independent in the indulgence of them. Nowhere else may one find individuals more notably independent and original than in Japan.

Frederick Starr, “The Old Geographer: Matsuura Takeshiro,”  
*Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 44:1 (1916), p. 1.

## **1. Introduction**

This report is a preliminary investigation of the cultural and social history of amateur collecting networks in “Greater Taisho Japan”—the era from late Meiji through into the early years of Shôwa.<sup>1</sup> I will focus on the activities of the American anthropologist Frederick Starr (Fig. 1), from his first major research trip to Japan in 1909 until his death in Tokyo in 1933, and on the two networks with which he was most intimately involved throughout those years, that of collectors of folk toys and that of the Nôsetsu-kai, whose members were involved in the creation, posting, exchange, and collection of votive woodblock-printed placards known as *nôsetsu* or *senjafuda* (“*ofuda*” for short). Such objects do not always come to mind when we think of “Taisho popular imagery,” the focus of this research group, but in fact they were widely visible at the time and the object of much interest in the aficionado circles that were dedicated to the remembrance of the pre-Meiji past.

Starr was deeply involved in both toy and placard collection, both as himself a dedicated collector of things of all sorts, but also as an anthropologist—or more precisely as an

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<sup>1</sup> I here use “Greater Taisho” mostly for convenience in giving a name to the era of Starr’s involvement with Japan, from 1904 until 1933, and in deference to the use of “Taisho imagery” in this research group of which this report is a part. “Greater Taisho” has been defined variously and with several different starting dates (1900, 1905, 1910) as well as ending dates (1930, 1931, 1935). See Stegewerns 2001: 144 for the origins and problems of the “Greater Taisho” periodization in political history. The only use of the term that I have seen in cultural history is in the exhibition catalogue *Taisho Chic* (2001), where the dates are given variously as 1900-30, 1900-35, and 1915-35, and where it is argued to correspond to the “dovetailed” eras of Art Deco and Art Moderne.



**Fig. 1. Frederick Starr on the road, traveling the San'yôdô highway in February 1917. Starr 1919b, frontispiece.**

ethnographer, one who observes and describes the customs of a people. The best of Starr's published writings on Japan are those about toy collecting (Starr 1921a and 1926) and about the *Nôsatsu-kai* (Starr 1917 and 1921b). They have been surpassed by more thorough and scholarly work in the period of almost one century since, but not entirely, and in particular not in terms of the direct personal observations that Starr was able to make. In addition, Starr was what we would call today a "participant observer," and himself became a topic of considerable discussion and attention, particularly for his *nôsatsu* activities, which earned him the popular nickname of "Ofuda Hakushi" or (in his own translation), "doctor of the honorable placards." In other words, Starr was himself a revealing historical actor, fully a part of the networks in which he was involved. Of course, he was treated as a foreigner, of which he himself was always conscious, but he also seemed to have been accepted for his genuine interest in toys and placards and eagerness to learn about them, and for the publicity that his participation offered.

Of further interest are both the similarities between these two networks, and some of their striking differences. One major concern of this article is to use this comparison to shed more light on Taisho culture. Broadly speaking, both networks were driven by a certain nostalgia, in the case of the toy collectors for the locality (*kyôdo*) and the Japanese "folk," and for the *nôsatsu* groups, for what came to be called "Edo taste" (*Edo shumi*). But they also differed sharply in their class orientation, the toy collectors tending to be more educated and

upper-class, with strong provincial networks, and the *nôsatsu* groups that were more artisanal and lower class, and more concentrated in the metropolitan areas of Tokyo and Osaka. There were at the same time many overlaps between the two, creating a complex and evolving tapestry throughout the 1910s and 1920s.

## 2. The Inspiration of Yamaguchi Masao

I wish first to note the ways in which the anthropologist Yamaguchi Masao has influenced my thinking in this report. This debt is, as Yamaguchi has himself noted, the product of a certain process of network-like connections that began with my own interest in Starr. It started when I myself began in 1987 to study the history of the “One-Mat Room” (Ichijôjiki 一畳敷) of Matsuura Takeshirô (1818-88), a famed explorer of Ezo in the 1850s who late in life constructed a tiny room out of pieces of historical wood donated by his friends throughout Japan. (The room today survives on the campus of International Christian University in Mitaka, Tokyo.<sup>2</sup>) In gathering material on Matsuura, particularly concerning his later career as an antiquarian and collector, I soon discovered that some of the most valuable material was to be found in the short biography “The Old Geographer: Matsuura Takeshiro” that Frederick Starr wrote in 1916 [Starr 1916]. Indeed, this was the first biography of Matsuura to be written in any language. I therefore undertook preliminary research on Starr himself, visiting the Frederick Starr Papers at the University of Chicago, where I uncovered valuable material from Starr’s field notes concerning his own investigation of Matsuura [Smith 1994, 38-43].

It was when I finally pulled together the manuscript of my book on the One-Mat Room, in the spring of 1994, that I had the chance opportunity to meet Professor Yamaguchi Masao for the first time. As he and I talked about our mutual interests, it soon became clear that there was a crucial common link in Frederick Starr. I did not realize at the time that Yamaguchi was then completing his series in the magazine *Hermes* 『ヘルメス』 that would be published just over a year later, in June 1995, as ‘*Haisha*’ *no seishinshi* [Yamaguchi 1995]. I provided Yamaguchi with a copy of the galley proofs of my Taizansô book, and as he himself has recounted, he read it with astonishment [Yamaguchi 1995:543]. First of all, he was already familiar with Matsuura Takeshirô, both for his explorations of Hokkaido (of which Yamaguchi himself is a native) and as a leading antiquarian of the middle Meiji period, a key precursor of the late Meiji-Taisho networks of “*haisha*”—those who ‘lost’ the Meiji Restoration, of which more below—that he had been researching, and would continue to work on for several more years, culminating in 2002 in the publication of *Uchida Roan sanmyaku* [Yamaguchi 2002].

But my Taizansô manuscript was instrumental in introducing Yamaguchi to Frederick Starr, whom he quickly came to recognize as deeply involved in the *haisha* networks of the Taisho period. As a result, Yamaguchi added a newly composed (*kaki-oroshi*) epilogue to ‘*Haisha*’ *no seishinshi* that dealt exclusively with Starr. And it was then in turn that I started

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed history of the One-Mat Room and of the Taizansô villa of which it is a part, see Smith 1994.

to learn much from Yamaguchi, as I began to digest his detailed research in *'Haisha' no seishinshi* and *Uchida Roan sanmyaku*. I will expand on the implications of Yamaguchi's ideas for our understanding of Starr below, and here would merely like to express my deep appreciation for his inspiration.

### 3. Frederick Starr: An American Original in Japan

The American anthropologist Frederick Starr (1858-1933) visited Japan fifteen times from 1904 until his death in Tokyo in 1933,<sup>3</sup> and by 1917 he was declared (by himself, we must assume) to be the “Best Known Foreigner in Japan” [Oppenheim 2005a: 693]. Starr's renown may well have reflected the instincts of a born publicity hound, as various critics—especially his colleagues at the University of Chicago—have been wont to suggest. But it was precisely Starr's understanding of aspects of contemporary Japan that were never mentioned by other Western writers that enabled him to make himself so well known. A short and stout but energetic man, of unprepossessing appearance but congenial manner, Starr as an anthropologist homed in on dimensions of Japanese life that seemed somehow distinctively and therefore traditionally “Japanese,” and yet proved adaptable to rapid economic and social change in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I hope to suggest that it was only these modern changes, particularly in communications and transportation that enabled ever quicker contact and over longer distances within Japan than had been possible before mid-Meiji, that made such a perpetuation of tradition possible. Such modern change was very much the midwife of what came to be understood as “tradition.”

Although Starr's field work as an anthropologist began in the formative years of the discipline (mainly in Mexico, before his first trip to Japan in 1904), and his continuing work for more than a decade thereafter (mostly in Africa), focused on conspicuously “uncivilized” societies, his interest in Japan was wholly urban and in many ways contemporary. He sometimes referred to “Old Japan,” the term that by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had become conventional to describe Japan before obvious westernization beginning in the 1860s, but he never seemed to have imagined any radical historical break between a static “old” Tokugawa regime, and a “new” and rapidly changing Meiji. He was equally at home with the survival of customs and social habits that obviously stemmed from Edo, and with all the many “modern” changes that continued to transform those customs.

Frederick Starr was born in 1858 as the son of Presbyterian minister of the same name in the town of Auburn in upstate New York, to which his father had fled after gaining a perilous notoriety as an outspoken abolitionist living on the east side of the Missouri River during the violent era of Bloody Kansas. The young Starr was raised in a progressive environment, attending the Oswego Normal School, known for introducing Pestalozzi's methods of education in the “Oswego Plan.” Starr graduated in 1882 from Lafayette College, a Presbyterian school in Easton, Pennsylvania, proceeding to a PhD in geology from the same

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<sup>3</sup> Starr himself counted the number of his trips in Japan, and press accounts of his arrival (at least from about his fifth visit) often mentioned the exact ordinal number of the visit.

institution in 1885. He began teaching biology in 1884 at Coe College, another Presbyterian-affiliated school, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

During summers from 1885, Starr was involved as an instructor and then registrar at the popular Chautauqua Institute, where he was able to hone the speaking skills that he seems to have inherited from his preacher father. It was probably here at Chautauqua in the late 1880s that he met William Rainey Harper, also a Chautauqua regular, who would ask him in 1891 to become the first professor of anthropology at the new University of Chicago that Harper had been commissioned to create with funds from John D. Rockefeller.

Certain features of Starr's background stand out from this brief summary of his upbringing, education, and early teaching career. First, he was the son of a Protestant minister, which may (or may not) have been related to his lifelong abstinence from alcohol and tobacco, but which may be more pertinent to his strong sense of justice—particularly racial justice, given his father's deep abolitionist convictions. As mentioned during his lifetime by some of his defenders, Starr tended to support colonial subjects against their masters, most specifically in his criticism of American imperialism in the Philippines and of what he saw presciently in the Versailles Treaty as “a foolish, fatal blueprint for more war” [Statler 1983:248]. He also condemned the League of Nations as “nothing but a selfish, narrow, bigoted, hostile little clusters of white people,” all with entrenched imperialist interests and designs. To be sure, Starr was inconsistent on this score, specifically in his support for Japanese control of Korea and Belgian rule in the Congo, although Robert Oppenheim has recently argued suggestively that Starr's anti-imperialism was above all directed against imperialism on the part of the Great Powers and the United States, leading him to conceive of Japan and Belgium as acting defensively against (or in imitation of?) threats from the larger world powers [Stocking 1979a, 1979b; Oppenheim 2005a and 2005b].

At the same time, Starr's instincts and proclivities as a student were firmly in the natural sciences, specifically geology and biology. Despite the religious connections of family and schooling, Starr emerged as a committed rationalist, persuaded in particular of the correctness of the principles of evolution, not only in the natural world, but in human society and culture as well—an issue that remains contested among those who have tried to take stock of Starr's broader place in the history of anthropology. Suffice it to say that the dominant image of Starr remains that of an unrepentant evolutionist until the end of his career, unable finally to adjust to the historical relativism introduced by his contemporary and ultimate rival, Franz Boas (1858-1942).

Both by his scientific academic training and from his inborn interest in people, Starr seems to have been quickly drawn to the infant discipline of anthropology. The details are unclear, but he apparently decided to travel to Yale University in 1888 for advanced training under William Graham Sumner (1840-1910, the first professor of sociology at Yale) and James Dwight Dana (1813-95, a renowned geologist). The combination of patrons was revealing of Starr's emerging interests, and the more important of the two turned out to be Dana, the naturalist, who introduced Starr to the American Museum of Natural History, in a position that engaged him in work on collections from 1889 until the call from Harper to join the new Chicago faculty two years later.

Starr's work at the premier museum of natural history in the United States made him an obvious candidate for the position in anthropology that Harper wished to create in his new University of Chicago. As it turned out, however, Starr faced numerous obstacles as the first appointment in anthropology at Chicago, the details of which have been discussed in detail by others [Miller 1975; Stocking 1979; McVicker 1989], but suffice it to say that three factors seem to have been at work, one of disciplinary definition and institutionalization (specifically, whether anthropology should remain a subsidiary branch of the department of sociology), another of complex rivalry over the relationship between the university and the new city-run Field Museum that was established on the basis of the collections from the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, and finally that of Starr's own independent personality, one that led him to seek attention in the popular press rather than within the confines of his own profession.

Whether or not Starr was truly a "publicity hound," he obviously enjoyed attention. He loved to speak in public, and apparently was a gifted orator, to the point that he was commissioned to engage in public debates in the 1920s with the likes of Clarence Darrow, on such topics as one at the Garrick Theatre in Chicago in March 1920 on the question "Is Life Worth Living" (to which Starr argued in the affirmative, itself a mark of his generally positive personality) [Darrow and Starr 1920]. He also chose public themes calculated to titillate popular audiences, such as whether cannibalism could ever be justified, or (still more controversially) whether women were innately inferior. The press loved it, and often presented his ideas in far more exaggerated and tabloid ways than he may have preferred. But he is not on record as objecting, and his scrapbooks that survive in the Frederick Starr papers at the Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago bear witness to his own intense interest in the press coverage of his activities.

Starr was also highly popular with his undergraduate students at the University of Chicago, and through the course that he regularly taught on "Japan" from at least after his return with the Ainu group in 1904, he seems to have succeeded in spreading sympathetic interest in Japan long before any systematic academic offerings were available in any other university in the United States. His classroom manner seems to have been casual, never formally lecturing from a podium, but sitting on a table with his short legs hanging over and rather *talking* to his students.<sup>4</sup>

#### **4. Starr's First Encounter with Japan: Assembling the Ainu Group of 1904**

Frederick Starr's first encounter with Japan, or indeed any country outside the Americas, was in February 1904, in order to "secure" a group of Ainu for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition that began later that year in St. Louis. Starr had been specifically invited by the chief of the department of anthropology for the exposition, William John McGee (1853-1912), a contemporary of Starr who was similarly devoted to spreading popular understanding of their common discipline. Until this point, Starr had been exclusively

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<sup>4</sup> Statler 237, who suggests that from the mid-1890s he taught a "pioneering course called simply 'Japan'." I doubt that Starr taught such a course until after his first trip to Japan, but have yet to confirm this.

concerned with the native peoples of the Americas (an enduring pattern in American anthropology for many years after), beginning with the Indians of Iowa while at Coe College, and then developing a core specialty in the Indians of southern Mexico, starting with a three-month trip in summer 1894 that would continue annually through the late 1890s. So Japan was a huge leap for Starr, although he would follow soon after with even more daring trips to Africa.

Most of this trip, only 38 days in all, was devoted to the many difficulties of selecting the Ainu—in the end a total of nine people, including two couples each with a young daughter, an older couple with no children, and two single men—who would travel to St. Louis, and arranging to have their various belongings sent, including not only tools and artifacts, but an entire Ainu dwelling. But Starr and his traveling companion, Manuel Gonzales, did spend some preliminary time in Tokyo making the complex arrangements. It was in Tokyo that he first met Tsuboi Shôgorô, professor of anthropology at the Imperial University, a connection that would be decisive for establishing the patterns of associations and interests in Japan that Starr would later develop. I will return to Tsuboi below, but basically he served as an essential bridge for Starr, between the hierarchal world of academe and the “outsider” network of amateur collectors and scholars.

Collecting was part of Starr’s official task on his first visit, as well as his lifelong personal obsession. Remember that he began his professional career as a museum worker for collections and exhibitions at the American Museum of Natural History. Museums were central to the entire enterprise of the rapidly growing discipline of anthropology, and although Starr was ultimately unable to develop a “strong museum-university bond that was critical to all early anthropology” [McVicker 1989:214], he never lost his passion for collecting, and some of his collections did indeed end up in major museums, in particular his Mexican objects in the Field Museum in Chicago, and the Ainu artifacts that he gathered both in 1904 and on a later trip in 1910 [Kotani 1994]. Starr also made conscientious efforts to find good homes for his artifacts on his return, and followed carefully the emerging standards for documentation of the details of the time and place of his collection of each object.<sup>5</sup> But the bug of acquisition of physical objects seems to have been built into his character. A Japanese newspaper reporter in early 1910 visited him at the house he was then renting in Tokyo and was astonished to see an entire room packed with folk artifacts, while a short biography written by his successor at the University of Chicago noted that his apartment was “a labyrinth of books stacked on the floors of various rooms” [Cole 1935].

The Ainu group at the St. Louis exposition in 1904 turned out to be a great success. Today we have every reason to view such “living museums,” in which alien peoples were put on public display, as an affront to human rights, but by the standards of the time, the Ainu were treated with kindly interest (if frequent journalistic excess), and seem to have had a

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<sup>5</sup> McVicker 1989, pp. 222-25, gives an interesting account of Starr’s offer to create a collection of Mexican ceramics for Franz Boas for the AMNH in 1907, using money offered by a NY collector (which Boas never accepted), and there survives at the Brooklyn Museum a correspondence between Starr and the Brooklyn curator Stewart Culin that suggests Starr’s primary concern for the well-being of the artifacts themselves; see Kotani 1994 for Japanese translations of the documents.

generally positive experience. They all returned safely to their villages, and were able to improve their lives with the profits of their adventure, as Starr discovered when he visited them all on a trip to Hokkaido in February 1910 [VanStone 1993]. As for Starr himself, his trip to Japan stirred a strong new personal interest in the country, and he became active in studying Japan, making public pronouncements about US-Japan relations, and teaching a regular course about Japan at the university, likely one of the first in America [Statler 1983:248]. In the meantime, he continued to pursue his interests in other areas, opening up a wholly new phase of interest in Africa, with a much-publicized trip to the Belgian Congo from September 1905 for over a year until December 1906. He also took a brief trip to the Philippines in spring 1908, and in 1912 another African voyage, this time to Sierra Leone and Liberia. He acted much more in the manner of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century adventurer than a 20<sup>th</sup>-century academic, and seems to have been happy with his choice.

He did not forget Japan, however, and seems to have planned well in advance for the extended research trip of that he made for ten months, from October 1909 through July 1910. This trip proved to be a key turning point in Starr's career, after which Japan would be overwhelmingly his preferred foreign destination, with several side trips to Korea.

### **5. Starr's Return to Japan in 1909-10: Entering the Outsider Networks**

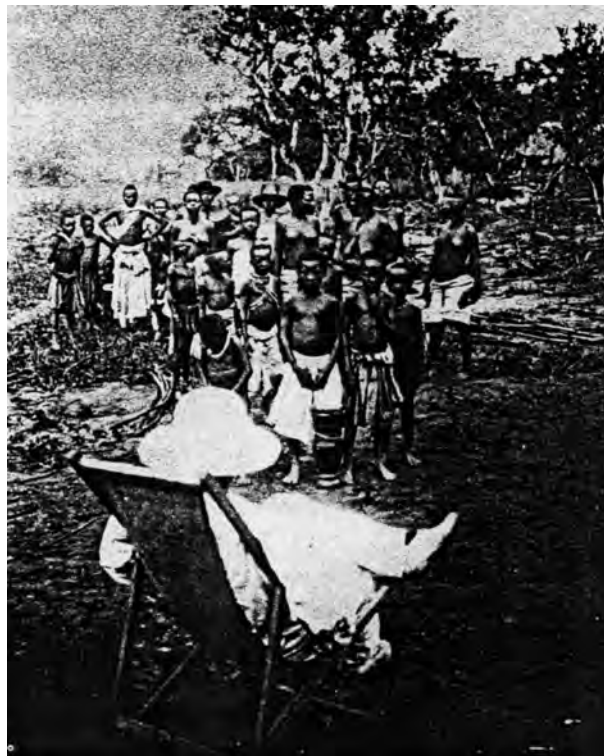
What so drew Starr back to Japan, and what kind of "research" did he propose? All his former explorations had been, as with so much early anthropology, of cultures considered to be in some way "savage," well down the evolutionary scale, in the hopes of charting the "progress" humans had made on the way to the ultimate goal of "civilization."

Such was the case of his primary research target before 1904, the Indians of southern Mexico, where he made four successive annual research trips of three months each, from January to March of 1898 through 1901. He reported on this work in a popular account of 1908, *In Indian Mexico*, in which he described his three goals of documentation for each of the tribes—ultimately, a total of twenty-four—that he visited. First, he made fourteen different physical measurements of 100 men and 25 women in each tribe; second, he took photographs of everything visible about each culture (dress, customs, buildings, and so forth); and finally, he made plaster busts of five individuals in each tribe. This latter process of "busting" earned Starr criticism for what appeared to be an unpleasant procedure (although the subjects were paid well), and sometimes coercive methods. Curiously, Starr includes as an appendix to his book a highly unflattering report by a Chicago newspaper reporter who observed his methods in Mexico in March 1899. Starr is described as a "fat little man" who found himself "deep in the midst of the savages" and who is seen "threatening, cajoling, . . . and in general conquering his series of strange nations." In short, Starr in this account seems to conform to the worst image of the Western anthropologist in the age of imperialism, although his own text is far more benign, and largely descriptive. Still, it remains odd that Starr seems to have been unfazed by what we can today read only as a tone of sensationalism that verged on ridicule among the reporters who recorded his work for the general public.



Starr's next great adventure into the world of native tribes would also prove controversial, but for different reasons. This was a 15-month journey, from September 1905 until December 1906, to the Congo Free State, a private colony of King Leopold of Belgium that since its founding in 1885 had been charged with brutal mistreatment of the local peoples, including atrocities and mutilation, a situation brought to still wider attention by the publication in 1903 of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Starr's interest in the natives of the Congo stemmed from his meeting with members of a group of them at the St. Louis exposition in 1904, and talking with the missionary who had procured them (just as he had assembled the Ainu group). Starr traveled thousands of miles up the Congo River and its tributaries, studying 28 different native tribes, and returned to report in a series of articles in the *Chicago Tribune* in early 1907 that he found little current evidence of any atrocities, but rather "ordinary conditions of a country invaded by the white man," with a "negro population far happier than I had dreamed it possible"—or at least no worse than the treatment "measured out to the Southern negro under . . . Theodore Roosevelt" [Starr 1907].

The accuracy of Starr's observations of conditions in the Congo remains to be assessed, but the details of his actual reports suggested that he respected and admired the African peoples whom he encountered. Nevertheless, his appearance of justifying Western colonial rule has diminished his reputation in the annals of anthropology, as revealed by a photo (Fig. 2) chosen for a 1975 exhibition of the history of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago. The image, in which we see only the back of Starr, dressed entirely in white and seated in a chair while facing a group of standing tribesmen, seems to offer an implicit message of the white man controlling the black natives.



**Fig. 2. Frederick Starr receiving farewell from the Congo natives, 1906. Stocking 1979a:12**

In Japan, however, Starr could not have been faced with a more different culture than those he had found in Mexico and the Congo. Rather than tribal peoples of the sort widely termed “savages” at the time, Japan was old and highly civilized nation in the process of rapid modernization. Having arrived in Japan in 1904 on the very day that war was declared on Russia, Starr widely predicted a Japanese victory long before other Western observers considered that a possibility. Even more significant was the very different focus of Starr’s interests in Japan. Rather than turning to rural villages, where he would surely have expected to find the most “traditional” manifestations of the culture, he plunged rather into the heart of urban popular culture. Although his interests had always been broad, he now turned decisively away from physical anthropology (of the sort he practiced by measuring and “busting” Mexican Indians) in the direction of an emphasis on what is now called “folk” culture, but with an urban bent. In the process, he encountered a thriving community of Japanese collectors and amateur scholars who had much the same interests.

Starr did not stick exclusively to the big cities, to be sure, for he also enjoyed traveling the old highways of Japan, starting with a three-week trek by foot and jinriksha in November 1915 along the Tokaido from Tokyo to Kyoto, pausing en route for a side trip on to Kyoto and back by train in order to attend the coronation ceremonies for the Taisho emperor on November 10. The resulting publicity and book were so well received that Starr won the sponsorship of the *Ôsaka Asahi Shinbun* in 1917 for a whole series of “trekking accounts” (*angyamonô*) that were published later that year in book form [Starr 1917b, 1919]. Starr also took a serious interest in climbing Mt. Fuji, which he first accomplished in summer 1917 and later repeated three more times (including the more difficult circumferential “Ochûdô” route), and in studying the natural and cultural history of the mountain in detail. As with all his interests in Japan, he was particularly attracted by the religious dimension, which in the case of Fuji was manifested in the Fuji-kô religion, of which he encountered many practitioners in his *nôsatsu* collecting circles. The resulting book that he wrote was by far the most authoritative work on Mt. Fuji in English at the time, and remains useful today [Starr 1924].

But it was primarily the big cities that lured Starr, above all Tokyo, particularly for its Edo past, which was still palpable in its landscape and surviving native population, at least until the earthquake of 1923. So it was that Starr was drawn most to those parts of the city that had been least transformed by modernity, what was coming to be called the “*shitamachi*,” the old downtown area. Indeed, the ethnographies that he would compile of toy and *nôsatsu* collecting reflected the great boom of nostalgic “Edo taste” (*Edo-shumi*) in the two decades before the earthquake.

Starr’s nascent instinct for “Edo taste” was revealed in a thorough inspection of the Asakusa area, the great popular center of entertainment clustered around the ancient Kannon temple of Sensôji, that he made over the course of two days, just one week after arriving in Japan at the beginning of October, 1909. Reflecting his taste for publicity as well as the curiosity that he provoked among Japanese, Starr was accompanied by a reporter for the *Asahi Shinbun* who wrote a six-article series in that newspaper describing their explorations in detail. By that time, Starr had already settled into a Japanese house in the Hongô area, arranged by Professor Tsuboi Shôgorô, his local patron from the time of his trip to gather the

Ainu group in 1904.<sup>6</sup> The *Asahi* series reveals first of all Starr's eagerness to conform to Japanese customs as thoroughly as possible. When they visited a restaurant, he boasted to a geisha called to perform for them that he could sit in the proper formal Japanese style known as *seiza*, having practiced for three days. When presented with raw fish (*sashimi*), he admitted that it was not to his taste, but that in two or three days, he would become accustomed to it. And perhaps most importantly, he decided at the end of the first day that it was "not interesting" (*omoshiroku nai*) to go about the streets in Western dress (although this was in fact an era in which more and more Japanese urban men did so), and the next morning he went to Mitsukoshi department store to purchase a complete outfit of a kimono with *haori* jacket. From this time on, Starr became famous for wearing nothing but Japanese dress in Japan (Fig. 1), changing clothes as soon as he arrived in Yokohama. He would finally be placed in his coffin, at his request, in full traditional wear. In his previous expeditions to Mexico and the Congo, Starr had made no effort to conform to native dress; it would probably have appeared odd, and his identity remained wholly that of the white outsider. That he could get away with native dress in Japan was a mark of the transformation that he had now undergone. He managed in this way to convey a sense of solidarity with the disappearing culture of old Edo, and it bears emphasis that the Japanese with whom he would become most intimate still themselves wore what by now was called by the new term "Japanese dress" (*wafuku*), in distinction from the increasingly common "Western dress" (*yôfuku*).

The *Asahi* reporter emphasized that although Starr was expert on "Old Japan" (*kyû-Nihon*), he also aimed at "sympathetic research" on "New Japan," so that his tour of Asakusa included a stop at a popular vaudeville theater as well as a ride on a Ferris wheel. But overall, Starr was particularly preoccupied, as he would be throughout his explorations of Japan, in the core importance of religion in structuring the common culture of Japan, and virtually all of his ensuing preoccupations involved the investigation of the material paraphernalia of popular belief. Despite their differing social constituencies, this was the core commonality that explains his obsession with both toys and *nôsetsu*: both were at heart votive objects, either offered or acquired in the hopes of receiving the worldly benefits of good luck, prosperity, health, and happiness. In his Asakusa tour, for example, he was quickly drawn to a toy store, and to a papier-mâché dog of the sort often sold at shrines as a charm for safe birth. In his classic analysis of Japanese toys in 1926, he would stress how many of what the Japanese call "toys" (*omocha, gangu*) are of underlying religious significance.

In the end, however, Starr's truly important contribution was less in the study of the objects themselves, although they were what attracted him, and the meanings of which endlessly preoccupied him, but rather in the social matrices in which these objects came to be collected, depicted, and exchanged in a distinctive subcultures of modern Japan.

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<sup>6</sup> The house was the residence of the late Hasegawa Futabatei in Hongô Nishikata-machi 10-34, where Starr and his companion Manuel Gonzales were provided with an elderly couple as housekeepers. See "Beijin no Asakusa kenkyû," *Asahi shinbun*, Oct. 8, 1909.

## 6. Yamaguchi Masao's Theory of a Horizontal Network of "*Haisha*"

Just as Starr plunged almost immediately after his arrival in Japan in the autumn of 1909 into the popular culture of the Asakusa area as his preferred site of research, he seems to have been drawn almost as quickly in a distinctive network of Japanese collectors and aficionados of "old things" (*kobutsu*), who were much immersed in the culture of the city of Edo (or "Yedo" as it was usually romanized in Starr's era) as it still survived into the early twentieth century, over four decades after it had been renamed "Tokyo" in 1868. It would be through this network of learned but often playful antiquarians that Starr would develop his particular interests in folk toys and *nôsetsu*, writing his seminal articles on those objects and the clubs involved with them.

It is only recently that the notion of a coherent "network" has been applied to these antiquarian groups that flourished from mid-Meiji through Taisho, by the anthropologist Yamaguchi Masao (1931-), as part of his concept of "*haisha*" mentioned above, developed in two series of journal articles in the 1990s, first in *Hermes* in 1991-94 and then in *Gunzô* in 1995-98 [published in book form as Yamaguchi 1995 and 2001]. The word *haisha* literally means "the defeated," or perhaps more expressively "the vanquished." The specific reference is to those who lost out to the coalition of victorious domains from western Japan—in particular, Satsuma and Chôshû—that led the imperial restoration of 1868 and dominated the new Meiji government. The valence of "*haisha*" as used by Yamaguchi has less sense of being actually "defeated" than an eagerness to opt out of the values of the new Meiji state and its emphasis on centralization, bureaucratization, hierarchy, and patriotic loyalty, remaining what might better be called "unrepentant outsiders" who preferred to rely on their own private networks of mutual interest and support.

In terms of the specific social origins of the *haisha*, however, those whom Yamaguchi considered particularly important were the former retainers of the defeated Tokugawa bakufu, the so-called "*kyû-bakushin*," who were dispersed in many directions in the early Meiji years. The most coherent cohort among them, and one that came to interest Yamaguchi in particular, was that which followed the last shogun, Tokugawa Keiki, to his new domain in Shizuoka (the ancestral home of the Tokugawa clan) in the autumn of 1868. A number of former Tokugawa retainers did join the new Meiji government, but typically in the middle ranks, where their bureaucratic skills were sorely needed and well utilized, but which left them with little access to the top governmental posts that were largely monopolized by the imperial loyalists from Satsuma, Chôshû, and their close allies.

Yamaguchi's concept of the *haisha*, however, is in no way limited to the samurai class, and indeed one key characteristic of the concept is its indifference to class and status. It would be precisely this "democratic" social diversity of the collector groups with which he associated that most appealed to Starr. One key commonality of the *haisha* mentality was an allegiance to, and increasing nostalgia for, the kinds of networks that were to be found in late Tokugawa cities, but particularly in Edo, in such pursuits as the writing of *haikai* and *kyôka* verse, the practice of amateur literati painting (*bunjinga*), or indulgence in Chinese-style tea ceremony (*sencha*). All freely took in practitioners of whatever estate, whether samurai or commoner, artisan or merchant, and whatever economic level. In their loyalty to Edo culture

as it flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century, the *haisha* included a conspicuous element of the spirit of the native-born residents of Edo who had come to be known as “Edokko,” and who similarly felt left behind culturally in the early Meiji world of the domination of Tokyo by the new ex-samurai rulers from western Japan. The quintessential Edokko had come over time to be imagined as lower-class shopkeepers or artisans (not unlike the Cockney of London), but the Edokko spirit could equally well extend upwards in class to privileged bakufu provisioners, and indeed to bakufu samurai retainers themselves, virtually all of whom were born and bred in the city of Edo and shared in its common popular culture.

The figure whom Yamaguchi came to identify as the best representative of the independent spirit that he detected in the *haisha* networks was Uchida Roan (1868-1929), the son of a bakufu retainer and drop-out from the Meiji system of higher education who became a translator, critic, bibliophile, and connoisseur of Edo customs, toys, and *nōsatsu*. It was Uchida who provided the title focus for his 1995-98 *Gunzō* series of individual biographies and its book form as *Uchida Roan sanmyaku: ‘Ushinawareta Nihonjin’ hakkutsu*, literally “The Mountain Range of Uchida Roan: Excavating ‘Lost Japanese’.” The metaphor is both geological and archaeological, as if the cultural map of modern Japan were a topography determined by forces often hidden to normal vision, with certain cultural formations appearing as irregularly shaped mountain ranges of many peaks—one here named after a figure whom Yamaguchi felt to be particularly elevated—but only one peak among many. The task then is to perform the work of the archaeologist, and “excavate” the hidden network of connections among such mountain peaks (including the lower ranges) that have remained invisible beneath the dominant overlay map of civilization, with its controlling systems of political boundaries, education, and communications.

Yamaguchi’s conception of the *haisha* evolved in the mid-1990s more from such poetics and politics than from any systematic social-scientific analysis of cultural networks, reflecting his own self-identity as an outsider who always “sticks out” (*hamidashimono*). His basic theory, however, was outlined in a rough if still rhetorical way in the course of his biographical outlines of individual “*haisha*” and in a lecture of 1995 and an interview of 1997 [Yamaguchi 2000, chs. 1-2]. Yamaguchi sees the *haisha* networks as a form of horizontal structure bound by common interests, in distinct contrast to the “vertical society” that the sociologist Nakane Chie (1926-) expounded in her classic 1967 study, a society based primarily on educational meritocracy and strict pyramidal organization [Nakane 1967]. Yamaguchi sees the ideological roots of such a society in the “*risshin shusse*” success ethic of the Meiji period, and in the uniformity (the “homogenous society” of Nakane’s sub-title) of Japan today. Whether or not the members of the collector networks of late Meiji and Taisho that Yamaguchi describes can so easily be identified by anti-establishment “*haisha*” attitudes remains to be demonstrated; even more problematic is his suggestion that such horizontal networks provide a truly alternative form of social organization for Japan today. But it is a provocative and useful theory to begin exploring in a more systematic way.

## 7. The Shûkokai as the Matrix for the Folk Toy Movement

The Shûkokai was an organization of central importance both to Starr's own experience in Japan from the time of his 1909-10 trip, and more broadly to the entire phenomenon of collector networks in modern Japan. Although it was only one among numerous such clubs, which typically focused around a particular collection interest, and met periodically to examine and discuss each other's objects in a relaxed spirit of pleasurable exchange, the Shûkokai was one of the broadest in range, taking on anything that was in some way "old" and collectable, and lasting for close to half a century, a remarkable longevity for such informal groups. Equally unusual, the Shûkokai managed to publish a regular journal that included short essays by the members and, most importantly, recording all the actual objects that were brought to each "show-and-tell" meeting. By the time that the group finally dissolved under the pressures of war, in 1944, the Shûkokai had met fully 241 times.

There were ample precedents on which the Shûkokai could build, as a form of sociable gathering devoted to displaying and discussing curiosities and things from the past. The so-called *bussankai* ("product displays") that were held in Edo from the mid-eighteenth century to exhibit unusual natural products were one important historical forerunner, and by the early 19th century a number of such groups were dedicated to man-made as much as natural objects. One well-known organization was the Tankikai, led by the *gesaku* writer Kyokutei Bakin, the antiquarian and encyclopedist Yamazaki Yoshishige, and others, which met monthly 20 times in 1824-25, leaving a manuscript record of the objects titled *Tanki manroku*. This and other groups established the pattern where each would bring something old to the meetings, a picture or an object, and everyone would discuss them together.

Another key precedent was the production of painted or printed illustrations of collected objects. One famous effort along these lines was the *Shûko jisshu* of 1800 commissioned by Matsudaira Sadanobu, a large-format multi-volume woodblock-printed catalog illustrating and identifying old paintings, objects, and military items. Each was illustrated at actual size and in overall view, and classified among the "ten types" (*jisshu*) of the title. The term *shûko*, "gathering the past," which was already widely used in the later Edo period, was of direct inspiration in choosing the name for the Shûkokai itself. This grand antiquarian project was not the result of sociable gatherings among amateur collectors, but rather a large-scale project coordinated by a powerful *fudai* daimyo. Still, it was an influential model for providing detailed illustrations of historical objects, of the sort that would become increasingly common in the Meiji period. As we will see, the illustration of toys, in paintings and woodblock color prints, would become a major part of the folk toy movement, as Frederick Starr would describe in detail in his 1926 article on Japanese toy collectors.

In the wake of the Meiji Restoration, the enthusiasm for all things new and western worked to dampen antiquarian interests in the past, and the collapse of the samurai estate, which had done much to perpetuate interests in antique objects, had a similar effect. At the same time, many former samurai were forced to sell family collections in order to survive, creating a new and well-supplied commercial market in old books, paintings, and curios that lay ready to fuel the revival of collections that began in the 1880s and gathered momentum on into the Taisho period. Small groups of those known as "*shumisha* 趣味者" or "*kôzuka* 好

事家,” difficult words to translate but suggestive of a fondness for acquiring curious and distinctive objects, continued to meet in small circles and to show off and discuss their acquisitions.

Suzuki Hiroyuki has written a provocative book precisely about the “19<sup>th</sup> century of [Japanese] antiquarians” (*Kôkoka-tachi no 19-seiki*, 2002), in which he chronicles the impressive collecting, research, and publishing activities of an older generation of amateur antiquarians, born typically in the 1830s, of which Matsuura Takeshirô (1818-88) and Ninagawa Noritane (1835-82) were prime examples. (As we have seen, Frederick Starr took a particularly keen interest in Matsuura, carefully chronicling his Meiji-era religious devotions and antiquarian collecting activities [Starr 1916.]) Suzuki goes on to argue, however, that the rapid growth of academic professionalism in the new western-style Japanese universities from the 1880s soon left these older antiquarians (for whom he uses the Meiji term “*kôkoka*,” a translation of the English “antiquarian”) behind, so that by the time of an exhibition of their work in 1918, they were considered men of the distant past [Suzuki 2002:218].

What Suzuki describes as the “exit” (*taijô*) of these “19th century” antiquarians, however, was also the transition to an entirely new generation, the members of which were typically born in the 1860s or 1870s, and would be centered in the Shûkokai. Suzuki briefly mentions the Shûkokai, singling out just one of its leading—but older—members, Yamanaka Kyôko (1850-1928), without further pursuing the flourishing activities of that organization into the mid-twentieth century. In a sense, this new generation is parallel to that described by Kenneth Pyle in *The New Generation in Meiji Japan*, which chronicles a debate between the Min’yûsha and Seikyôsha, two rival groups of politically concerned journalists who came to prominence in the decade 1885-95 [Pyle 1969]. But the “new generation” of antiquarians had little overlap with these vociferous journalists who participated in public political debates: they were far more private, concerned less with words and ideas than with the pleasurable collection and investigation of tangible things.

It is important to grasp the exact circumstances of the founding of the Shûkokai in 1896, since it involved a critical joining of two trends and temperaments that found a single home in the remarkable person of Tsuboi Shôgorô (1863-1913), the Tokyo Imperial University anthropologist whom we have already encountered as Starr’s first academic contact in Japan in 1904, and also Starr’s patron on his second visit from the autumn of 1909, which would lead him into the world of *shumisha*-style collection, particularly that of folk toys.

For Yamaguchi Masao, Tsuboi was a pivotal figure in the formation of the *haisha* networks. He was of classic *haisha* background, born in the Ryôgoku district of Edo in 1863 as the second son of a physician in the service of the bakufu. His family was one of those who moved with the last shogun to Shizuoka in 1868, when Shôgorô was only five. He spent the next five years as a child in Shizuoka, a formative period in which he studied plants, made his own toys, and learned calligraphy and painting. He returned to Edo, now Tokyo, in 1873 at the height of the era of “civilization and enlightenment,” studied briefly at a school for English, and in 1877 at age 15 entered the preparatory school of the imperial university

that was then taking shape. Like Frederick Starr (who was five years older), he studied the natural sciences, with biology as his major, graduating in 1886.

Already as a student, Tsuboi was one of the discoverers of the excavation site in the Yayoi-chô district near the university that would give its name to the Yayoi ceramics unearthed there, and consequently to an entire era of prehistory. Also as a student, he had founded the Tokyo Anthropology Association (Tokyo Jinrui Gakkai), and would later become its first director when it was upgraded to a national organization. Tsuboi studied abroad for three years in England and France, returning in 1892 to become the first professor of anthropology in the College of Sciences at the Imperial University at the age of 29—precisely the same year that Starr became the first professor of anthropology at the University of Chicago. Tsuboi became a pioneer in the formation of the modern disciplines of both archaeology and anthropology, active in the excavation of shell mounds and *kofun* burial sites but also with a keen interest in contemporary cultural change—as revealed by his statistical survey of the styles of hair, dress, and footwear in the Japanese city in the years 1887-89 [Tsuboi 1990]. In all these respects, he was wholly a part of the modern Japanese academic establishment, rooted in the natural sciences.

The origins of the Shûkokai, however, reveal an entirely different side of Tsuboi, one devoted to the relaxed and playful world of amateur *shumisha*. The group probably grew to some extent out of Tsuboi's relationship with Hayashi Wakaki 林若樹 (1875-1938), to whom he was related by blood, twelve years younger but also a "*haisha*," the son of a former shogunal doctor. His father Hayashi Kenkai (1844-82) became surgeon general in the new Japanese Army, but died on a trip to Europe when Wakaki was still a child. Wakaki entered the elite First Higher School, but he was of frail constitution, and dropped out. He apparently had the resources to devote himself entirely to his own hobbies and pleasures, one of which was frequenting the anthropology lab of Tsuboi, and joining him for his health on walking excursions to explore archaeological sites in the Tokyo area. Hayashi seems already to have had connections with antiquarian collectors of his generation, an interest with which Tsuboi naturally sympathized. At any rate, Tsuboi is said to have proposed to Hayashi and two younger staff members of his lab that he thought the Tokyo Jinrui Gakkai, the official organization of the new discipline of anthropology that Tsuboi had helped found while still a student in 1884 and of which he was about to become the president in 1896, was too "rigid" (*katasugiru*), and that it might be nice to have a group with a more "relaxed" (*kudaketa*) atmosphere [Mimura Seizaburô (Chikusei) preface to Kimura 1935, pp. 4-5].

So it was that on January 5, 1896, at the Inshôtei restaurant in Ueno, the organizational meeting of the Shûkokai was held, with the aim of "planning a gathering for each to relate his own particular opinions over tea and cakes, in a playful spirit (*isshu no asobi o kanete*)."<sup>2</sup> From as early as the third meeting, four months later, they began an effort to include more "ordinary antiquarians" (*shisei no kôkoka*) [Mimura 1935], with the particularly important inclusion in that meeting of Shimizu Seifû (of whose fame as a toy collector we will see more below). This trend would continue, with a major escalation in the numbers of this Edo-oriented group in the meeting of September, 1898, when items from the Genroku period were displayed. From this point, there seems to have developed a rift between those interested



primarily in archaeology—the so-called “Stone Age group” (*sekki-ha*)—and the “Genroku group” that was oriented more to Edo-period objects. The latter became dominant after a meeting of July 22, 1899, when the rules were revised, but Hayashi Wakaki, whose interests spanned both factions, remained in control of the administration of the Shûkokai for years thereafter. Both types remained represented in the Shûkokai, although the general tenor of the group clearly shifted away from prehistorical archaeological artifacts, in the direction of ethnography and “Edo *shumi*.” Tsuboi himself, whose bridging interests were central to the entire conception of the Shûkokai, died of illness at the young age of fifty in 1913 in St. Petersburg, where he was attending an international conference. By then, however, the organization he had inspired was well established, and would last another thirty years.

Although the purpose of the Shûkokai was simply stated as “to collect and display objects and pictures relevant to understanding the past, in a spirit of friendly and pleasurable conversation, and to exchange such knowledge,” it should be noted that its organization and procedures were distinctively modern, not unlike that of a scholarly association. As mentioned above, it published a regular journal that included both essays by the members and detailed reports on its meetings. It maintained a membership list that was periodically published in the journal, complete with the addresses of each member and often a list of their collecting interests. The meetings themselves came from an early point to be organized by pre-determined themes (“*kadaï*”). By the time that Frederick Starr became acquainted with the group in 1909-10, the topics were of a sort calculated to stimulate the historical and ethnographic imagination. A handbill announcing all the topics for the five regular meetings for 1908 [Fig. 3], for example, included:

**January:** *1. Things about monkeys:* toys, objects, and pictures of monkeys. *2. Things for indoor games:* cards, backgammon, *go*, *shôgi*, shell-matching, etc. **March:** *1. Things of the Tenmei period:* paintings, objects, etc, centering on Tenmei and adjacent eras [ca 1770-1800]; *2. Things about gatherings:* banquets, *shogakai* painting and calligraphy displays, drinking bouts, eating contests, *okage-mairi* pilgrimages, *tomikuji* lotteries, *ikki* uprisings, anything related to gatherings; *3. Things about smallpox:* anything related to smallpox. **May:** *1. Things that hang down:* *sudare* and *misu* blinds, hanging signs, gourds, things that hang from the waist, wind chimes, *dôtaku*, hanging bells, amulet bags, hand-towel stands, hanging lanterns, and anything else that hangs down. *2. Things for outdoor games:* kites, *hagoita* battledores, tops, hobby-horses, etc. **September:** *1. Things about the head:* decorations for the head, cosmetics, earrings, necklaces, anything else related to the head. *2. Things about love:* love poems, love suicides, love letters, fortune-telling, any paintings or things related to love. **November:** *1. Things to blow and things to strike:* flutes, conch horns, blow darts, and other things to blow; *hyôshigi* wooden clappers, small bells, *mokugyo* Buddhist drums, and other things to strike. *2. Laughter:* *kyôka*, *kyôshi*, *rakugo*, and pictures or things related to the comic.

Although the meetings of the Shûkokai were well organized and fully reported in print, they were also relaxed and democratic, drawing members from a diverse variety of trades and professions, but all with a common interest in collecting and studying old things.

明治四十一年集古會課題	
猿に關するもの	會日 十一日第二土曜日午後
室内遊戯品	會日 十四日第二土曜日午後
天明古物	會日 十九日今日第三土曜日午後
集合群集に關するもの	會日 九日第二土曜日午後
痘瘡に關するもの	會日 九日第二土曜日午後
垂下するもの	會日 九日第二土曜日午後
戸外遊戯品	會日 十九日今日第三土曜日午後
首に關するもの	會日 十四日第二土曜日午後
戀に關するもの	會日 十四日第二土曜日午後
吹くもの、叩くもの	會日 十四日第二土曜日午後
笑	會日 十四日第二土曜日午後

猿に關するもの 猿の玩具、器具、書畫、其他猿に關するもの  
 室内遊戯品 歌留多、双六、投扇、碁、將棋、具合、おぼしめ、遊樂、其他  
 天明古物 天明を中心として前明和安永後、寛政、享和に至る時代の書畫、器、等  
 集合群集に關するもの 寄合、茶會、書畫會、酒會、大食會、御影繪り會、無樂、一  
 痘瘡に關するもの 凡て痘に關するもの  
 垂下するもの 腰、袖、袴、袴、腰、下、物、扇子、代、紙、釣、籠、釣、籠、玉、か  
 り、く、空、袋、腕、手、拭、巾、釣、籠、籠、其他、凡て、垂下するもの  
 戸外遊戯品 風、羽、子、紙、球、打、扇、竹、馬、回、打、其他  
 首に關するもの 頭部、の、裝飾、品、化粧、道具、耳、輪、首、飾、其他、凡て、頭部、に、關するもの  
 戀に關するもの 戀歌、心中、戀書、文、辻、占、其他、戀、に、關する、書、畫、器、物、  
 吹くもの、叩くもの し、眞、法、螺、吹、奏、等、の、吹くもの、拍子、木、牛、鐘、水、魚、等、の、叩く  
 笑 狂歌、狂談、落語、狂言、其他、滑稽、圖、に、關する、書、畫、器、物

集古會は年五回神田區仲町大時計前青柳亭に於て考古の資料と爲るべき器物書畫を蒐集展覽し談笑娛樂の間に互に其智識を交換するを以て目的としたる會合にして會員は會費として一ヶ年金壹圓貳拾錢（地方會員同金六拾錢）を納むれば毎會に出席し並に本會發行集古會誌（年五回發行）の頒布を得べし

東京市麹町區下二番町四十番地林方  
**集古會事務所**

Fig. 3: Shûkokai themes for 1908. (Yamaguchi 2002:63)

Here is the way one of the founding members of the group, the archaeologist Yagi Sôzaburô (1866-1942), writing in 1935 after he himself had long withdrawn from Shûkokai activities, characterized the early meetings:

The members came from both the world of officialdom and private citizens, the latter including such types as pawnbroker, dry-goods dealer, actor, yam vendor, newspaper reporter, private detective, bookseller, tea master, *haikai* poet, and farmer. There were no distinctions between old and young, high and low, or rich and poor. They gathered merely out of their personal interests (*shumi*), talking with enjoyment in an auspicious and harmonious atmosphere. It was as lively as the Nakamise shopping arcade at Asakusa, like the play of little children who had abandoned all concern for worldly desire or profit. [Yagi 1935:19]

The Shûkokai and similar groups, in short, provided precisely the kind of atmosphere into which Starr could fit with complete ease, and generally enjoy a warm welcome.

## 8. Starr in Japan: How Did He Do His Research in Japan?

Before tracking some of Starr's activities with the toy collecting and *nôsatsu* groups, it is useful to consider exactly how he went about his "research" in Japan. What skills did he bring to this task, and what sort of help did he seek? How did he fund his research, and in what ways did he plan to make his results public?

Within the world of American academe, and specifically within the University of Chicago, Starr was in many ways an outsider, little concerned with university hierarchies (he was never promoted to full professor, and probably did not care too much about it). He cleared cared about his teaching, however, and seems to have acquired an excellent reputation among undergraduates for his interesting and entertaining lectures, which he

delivered in a casual manner. “He didn’t lecture,” reports Oliver Statler, “he talked to his classes, sitting on his desk swinging his feet” [Statler 1983:237]. Similarly, Starr enjoyed a good reputation with the press, both in America and in Japan, since he was always willing to share his outspoken views on political and cultural matters. But precisely because of his popularity among undergraduates and journalists, we may imagine, he was viewed by many of his Chicago colleagues with a certain disdain, an attitude that has survived among some of the anthropologists who write about the history of their discipline [for example, Stocking 1979a and Schildkrout 1998].

Starr’s greatest challenge in conducting research in Japan was the Japanese language. He began serious on-the-ground investigations only after the age of fifty, well past the prime age for learning a wholly new and difficult language, nor did he have the time to study it closely, given his busy agenda and continuing interests in many other cultures. Oliver Statler states flatly that Starr “never learned the language,” but this is not particularly plausible, given his genial and sociable personality, and his genuine interest in languages (he loved riddles, and his earliest scholarly publication about Japan was on that topic [Starr 1910]). I encountered at least one piece of plausible evidence of Starr’s Japanese language ability, an article from the *Yomiuri shinbun* in May, 1921, in which the reporter visited Starr at the Kinokuniya inn in Shiba, his usual lodging in Tokyo, and wrote that Starr spoke “fluent Japanese” (*ryûchô na nihongo*), quoting him directly for his comments about his collection of Japanese toys [*Yomiuri shinbun* 1921]. By this time, already on his tenth trip to Japan, Starr had spent a total of more than three full years living in the country and traveling widely to explore its culture, so it is entirely likely that he did indeed speak decent—if not “fluent”—Japanese.

It is far less likely that Starr could read Japanese with any ease, however, a task that requires far longer training. And even for speaking, particularly during his first visits, Starr required the assistance of interpreters, something to which he was accustomed in his communication with the Mexican Indians (through Spanish-speaking interpreters), the Ainu, and the tribes of the Congo Free State. It was during his visit of 1909-10 that Starr engaged Maebashi Hanbei, who remained his single closest associate in Japan until Starr’s death over two decades later, in August, 1933, at which time Maebashi was the key person in charge of his funeral and later memorial services.<sup>7</sup> Although I have not yet been able to uncover any details about Maebashi’s personal history, his appearance is known from at least two surviving photographs (Figs. 6 and 23). One other occasional interpreter used by Starr was Tsukumo Toyokatsu (1894-1998), a graduate of Waseda University and skilled speaker of English who along with Maebashi accompanied Starr on his ascents of Mt. Fuji from 1917, and assisted him in his research [Starr 1924:vi]. Tsukumo was deeply involved in Japanese ethnography, with a particular interest in sex-related objects that he collected and housed in his own personal museum in Ayamegaike in Nara Prefecture. Adjacent to his museum is a bust of Frederick Starr on a pedestal, in front of which I posed for a picture with Tsukumo and Professor Inaga Shigemi of Nichibunken when we visited him in 1997 (Fig. 4). Tsukumo

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<sup>7</sup> Starr’s first interpreter when he arrived in September 1909 was not yet Maebashi, but one “Kajiwara”; it is unclear exactly when he engaged Maebashi. In some of his earlier writings, Starr gives Maebashi’s name as “Hanzô”; see Oppenheim 2005a:684; by at latest 1924 [Starr 1924: preface], he used the correct “Hambei.”

was then 102 years old, and far more preferred to talk about sex paraphernalia than about his experiences with Frederick Starr.<sup>8</sup>



**Fig. 4. Tsukumo Toyokatsu in front of bust of Frederick Starr in April 1997, with Prof. Inaga Shigemi (right) and the author. (Photo by author)**

Given his status as a professor at the University of Chicago, and his well-known expertise about Japan, Starr inevitably encountered many elite Japanese who had traveled and studied abroad, and who spoke good English. Among these was Tsuboi Shôgorô, who had studied for two years in England and France in the mid-1890s, and Takenouchi Shigeo (1876-1973), a botanist and eugenicist who had come to know Starr well during his years of graduate study at the University of Chicago, and seems to have often seen him in Japan.<sup>9</sup>

The one other assistant who requires mention is Manuel Gonzales (1883-1912), whom Starr first encountered in January, 1898, on one of his research trips to southern Mexico. Manuel was then age fourteen, trying to make a living to support his widowed mother and sister in his hometown of Cholula, in the state of Puebla. Captivated by “The Boy with the Smile” (the title of Starr’s later description of the encounter in Starr 1908: 92-95), he decided that Manuel could be a useful assistant on his continuing research in Mexico, but that first he should “bring the boy up to the States” to provide him with some training and education. Starr’s relationship with Gonzales was very close, as Starr would himself describe in detail

<sup>8</sup> By chance, Yamaguchi Masao visited Tsukumo the month after our own visit; see Yamaguchi 2002:130-32.

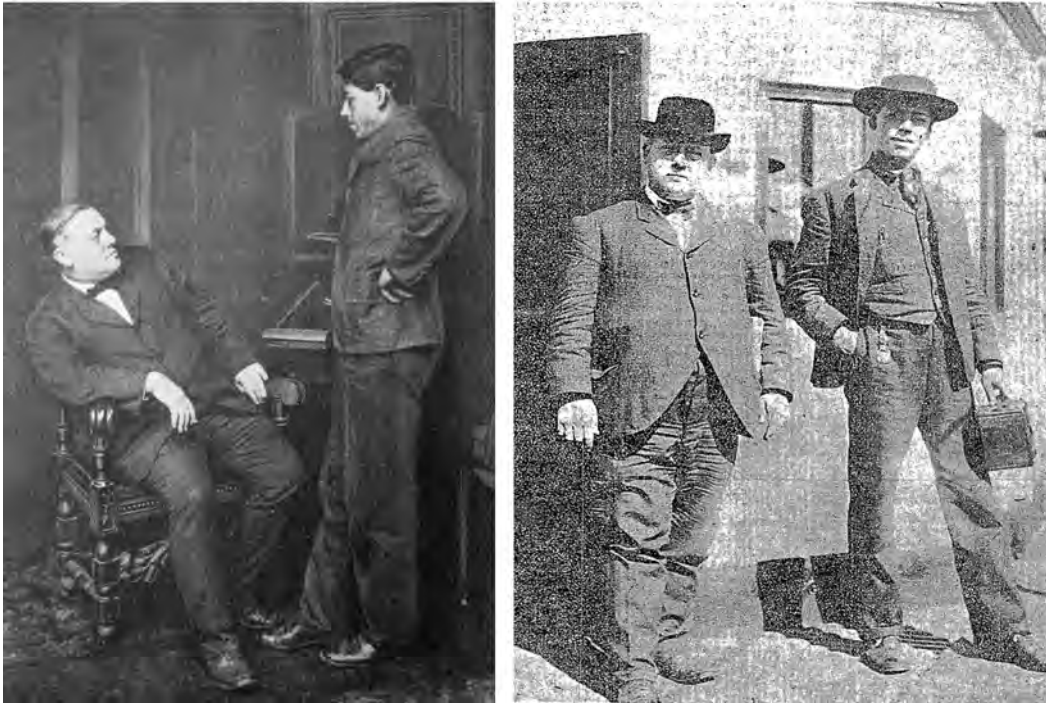
<sup>9</sup> It was Yamanouchi who wrote the detailed introduction to a collection of Starr’s travel diaries during a series of trips that he made in various parts of Japan in 1917, most sponsored by Japanese newspaper companies. See Yamanouchi 1926.

in an affectionate six-page memorial pamphlet that he produced after Manuel “was shot as he slept in bed in the City of Mexico,” on the night of July 8, 1912, dying two days later [Starr 1912]. Gonzales accompanied Starr on all his trips to Japan, from that in 1904 to assemble the Ainu group, through the third trip in 1911, and also on his trip to the Congo in 1905-06. He took numerous photographs on all these expeditions, a number of which survive. Fig. 5 shows Starr and Gonzales in 1905, at ages 44 and 22, respectively, before they left for the Congo, and after their return in late 1906; Manuel also appears at work with Starr in Fig. 6, along with Maebashi Hanbei.

For his writings on Matsuura Takeshirô, on the history of the Nôsetsu Kai, and on Japanese toy collectors—his three most original and scholarly publications about Japan—Starr made considerable use of published Japanese works, both primary and secondary, as well as recording his personal experiences and information from interviews. For accessing and reading the Japanese-language materials, he probably relied primarily on Maebashi, but he seems to have had other Japanese assistants as well, most of them university students who had some competence in English. Details about such matters await further study of Starr’s voluminous field notes from his trips to Japan. Suffice it to say that Starr wrote about Japan with scholarly authority, rarely making obvious factual errors, and with only occasional slips in the romanization of Japanese names and book titles, some of which may have been the errors of his informants, rather than Starr himself. What errors appear, particularly when dealing with old or difficult texts, probably reflects the limitations of his young assistants, who were generally focusing on the English language in their university studies, rather than on Japanese history.

In these various ways, Starr was able to cope with the Japanese language, and he clearly made serious efforts to assure that the oral information he obtained was accurate. At the same time, his most powerful research tool in all his research was his own power of visual observation, which was sharp and well developed. Starr was highly attentive to the things, people, and places that he saw, as attested by the details of his careful field notes; just to provide one example of an incident to which I will shortly return, in describing his visit to Marquis Tokugawa Yorimichi in November, 1919, Starr’s notes provide a concise portrait: “He is a rather tall and slender man, beyond 40, moustached, dressed in black frock and with two bows of red ribbon on his coat (I suppose signs of decorations). He speaks fair English.” In addition to his personal notes, Starr was also an enthusiastic proponent of photography, both still and moving, for creating ethnographic records, although it is unclear how much he was able to accomplish in this area after the death of Manuel Gonzales in 1913.

As for the financing of his many expeditions, Starr seems to have been completely self-supporting, perhaps because his strong sense of independence made him unwilling to seek outside support. He probably received quite generous fees for his many public speaking engagements in the U.S., but he complained in his correspondence about difficulties in raising money for his costly overseas expeditions to faraway places for long periods of time. He was in fact the director of the Walker Museum at the University of Chicago



**Fig. 5. Frederick Starr and his companion Manuel Gonzales, before (left) and after their trip to the Congo Free State in 1905-6. Left: Starr 1912:3; right: *New York Times*, Jan. 26, 1907.**



**Fig. 6: Frederick Starr (left) at work in Japan with his companion Manuel Gonzales (center) and his interpreter Maebashi Hanbei (right). Probably autumn 1911.**

throughout his tenure there, but seems to have had no interest in building up its research facilities, emphasizing instead the mission of the museum in public education. He did, however, have museums very much in mind as the prospective customers for the extensive collection activities in which he engaged wherever he traveled. Best documented are his collections of Ainu artifacts, which went largely to the Brooklyn Museum [Kotani 1994], and his collection from the 1905-06 Congo expedition, which he sold to the American Museum of Natural History in New York [Schildkrout 1998]. The whereabouts of his collections in Japan after 1909 remain to be ascertained; most certain is a large collection of *nôsatsu* albums at the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon.

### 9. Starr Discovers Japanese Toys

By the end of his first extended period of research in Japan from October 1909 until July 1910, Starr had become entrenched in the two particular collector sub-cultures that would continue to dominate his patterns of association in Japan, and about which he would leave the most detailed accounts. Although he would become most famous for his involvement with *nôsatsu* placards, it appears to be the toy collectors who first attracted his attention in the autumn of 1909.

Starr's field notes describe a chance encounter on the afternoon of November 22 when he met his friend Tsuboi Shôgorô, who informed him of an exhibition of toys at Nanki Bunko, the private library of Marquis Tokugawa Yorimichi (1872–1925), and asked if Starr might wish to attend. Yorimichi was the head of the Kii branch of the Tokugawa family, and had emerged as a patron of modern libraries—of which his was the first private example in Japan—as well as a promoter of conservation, both historical and natural. When Tsuboi and Starr arrived, a speaker in the lecture hall was holding forth on the educational value of toys. Starr gave this careful description and critique of the exhibition in his field notes:

We looked through the collection somewhat carefully. Although, of course, chiefly Japanese, it is not exclusively so; there were some toys from Korea, Manchuria, China, Burmah, Sweden, etc. The collection from Japan was not, in my opinion, so complete as might be expected from the owner's interest and wealth. Of dolls there were a good many, nice old ones, both of the easily breakable composition class and of the pea-headed damask clad; these they tell me were about 200 years old. Tops were disappointingly meager. Of kites there was a fair wall-display. Of battledores there were a good range in decoration, type, and age. There is considerable geographical variation in types of toys and on a large table map of Japan this variation was fairly brought out by placing the objects upon the appropriate section. Prof. Tsuboi told me with ingenuous interest that his toy (invented a year ago) can be had at the Mitsukoshi Dept Store! His toy is based upon the idea of the returning boomerang and consists of several bird-like forms to be projected in the hope of a fine flight and graceful return. The Marquis also has as part of the exhibit a series of books relative to games and toys and to the problems of childhood and adolescence.

Tokugawa Yorimichi was not alone at the time in his interest in toys, for Japan was in the midst of a toy boom. Much of this stemmed from a broader interest in childhood, a concept that was just being discovered in Japan under influence of the West, and promoted widely both by scholars and by commercial interests [Jones 2010]. The Children's Exposition (Kodomo Hakurankai) that was held in Ueno Park in 1906 was only one of many to follow in the ensuing years throughout Japan. As natural spin-off, exhibitions of toys also multiplied, and in 1909, Mitsukoshi department store staged the International Toy Show (Bankoku Omocha Ten), an effort that Tsuboi himself had been involved in planning [Kyburz 1994: 17-18; Yamaguchi 2000: 41-98; Jones 2010: 104-14]. Much of this interest was pedagogical, as in an article in *Fûzoku gahô* in 1909 in which the author first details the standards for choosing toys for children, providing lists of appropriate toys according to three age groups. He then goes on, however, to note that "Toys do not only give pleasure to children, for there are not a few adults who cherish them," providing a list of 13 different collectors, listing the specialty of each [Chikusui Ryôfu 1909]. As we shall see, however, the "toys" that adults collected were not necessarily the same that children played with.

From his observations at the Nanki Bunko exhibition, it is apparent that Starr was already well acquainted with Japanese toys, which is not surprising in view of his instincts and interests. He may also have been influenced by the extensive studies on games, particularly those of East Asia, by Stewart Culin (1858-1929), an contemporary of Starr and important early ethnographer who from 1892 was director of the Museum of Archaeology and Paleontology at the University of Pennsylvania, and from 1903 until his death at the Brooklyn Museum. Already in his tour of Asakusa shortly after his arrival in Japan in September 1909, Starr had spent considerable time scouring toy shops in the Nakamise arcade, and was certainly already busily building his own collection.

## 10. Shimizu Seifû and the Origins of Modern Toy Collecting in Japan

Starr was also quick to make the acquaintance of the great pioneer toy collector of modern Japan, Shimizu Seifû (1851-1913) [Fig. 7], whom we have already encountered as a key figure in the Edo-oriented "Genroku group" within the Shûkokai. His influence was reflected in the participation of numerous other toy collectors, and in the frequent submission of toys in Shûkokai meetings. (See Fig. 8 for a page of charming drawings of Daruma dolls by Seifû that appeared in the first issue of the Shûkokai journal in November 1896.) Already in the later Edo period, an interest in toys had emerged among the playful writers of *gesaku* fiction, and there survives a remarkable example in a color-printed book of 1773 entitled *Edo nishiki*, literally "Edo in Two Colors," both a pun on "Edo nishiki-e" (the multi-color "brocade" prints invented in 1765) and a metaphor for "new and old," since the book consisted of forty-odd pairs of old versus new toys. The identity of the editor "Rôraishi" ("Whistle Player"?) is unknown, although the introduction was by the famous *kyôka* poet and *gesaku* author Ôta Nanpo. In the end, this was an unusual one-off creation, but isolated illustrations of toys appear again in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century works of the sort mentioned earlier.





Fig. 7. Shimizu Seifû (1851-1913). Yamaguchi 2002:139.



Fig. 8: Shimizu Seifû, sketches of Daruma dolls from different parts of Japan, *Shûkokai shi*, no. 1, frontispiece (April, 1897).

Shimizu, however, came to his interest in toys through a chance event that looms large in the modern history of toy collection in Japan, the “*chikubakai*” or “hobby-horse party” that was held on March 6, 1880, as one of a succession of themed “dinner meetings” (*yūshokukai*) that were held from about 1878 by Takenouchi Arihisa (1832-82), the father of Shimizu’s close friend Takenouchi Kyūichi. Arihisa was known familiarly as “Tachō,” the name he used as a celebrated *nōsatsu* designer (Fig. 19). Starr would later write an admiring biography of Tachō, describing him as a classic “Edokko” [Starr 1932]. It is unclear whether “*yūshokukai*” should be treated as a proper noun or rather, given the casual and intimate nature of the gatherings, considered as a generic term. The idea of these meetings was straight out of late Edo culture: a theme would be set for the dinner, and each participant would bring a dish that suited the theme in some way. At the party itself, they would critique the various culinary contributions. As described by Shimizu years later, the idea for the “hobby-horse dinner” was “to return to childhood for one day, and behave like a child, and the dishes as well should be related to this idea. So for example, for rice-paste toys (*shinko-zaike*), ground taro was used, colored with green *wasabi*. For candy toys (*kinkiri-ame*), items were cut from *narazuke* pickles. In this way, each dish represented a toy.”<sup>10</sup>

Shimizu relates that he was suddenly inspired by this one evening event to begin collecting toys—an epochal inspiration in the history of modern toy collection, which was basically invented by Shimizu. His background was that of a dyed-in-the-wool Edokko, born as the eleventh-generation head of a prosperous shipping business that catered largely to daimyo and bakufu retainers. He describes his father as a dissolute type, who suddenly abandoned his family and headed for Kyoto, where he managed to set up a prosperous tea-house operation at the famous Kamogawa riverside below Shijō bridge. The young Shimizu had meanwhile been apprenticed to a maker of Noh robes, but was forced to succeed as family head at age fifteen. To handle the roughneck longshoremen who worked for him, he claims to have become a weight-lifting showman known as *chikara-mochi*, able to toss around and balance heavy bales of rice. [Shimizu 1912] We also know that he was trained in more literary arts such as *haikai*, for which he took the name Seifū, “Pure Breeze.”

Inspired by the toy-themed dinner, Shimizu says that he hit on the idea of collecting toys, for the practical reasons that unlike paintings and antiques, they were inexpensive and in no danger of forgeries, so no one else was doing it. He soon became hooked, traveling throughout Japan to collect as many different versions of local toys as possible. Within a decade, Shimizu had acquired hundreds of toys, and in 1891 began to publish illustrations of

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<sup>10</sup> Shimizu 1912, p. 6. This “hobby-horse dinner” has been pervasively mis-represented as the beginning of an ongoing organization of toy collectors, romanized as the “Takeuma-kai” (a clear error, since Shimizu’s 1912 account provided the furigana “*chikubakai*,” much more natural in Japanese), and translated as “Hobby Horse Club.” See for example, in English, Kyburz 1994, p. 17. The error seems to have originated with a garbled account in the entry for “Shimizu Seifū” in Saitō 1971, p. 160, and then spread widely. The Saitō version also provides a largely erroneous list of the names those attending the *chikubakai*. For Seifū’s own recollection, which has none of these names (except the sponsor Takenouchi), see Shimizu 1913, p. 264. It seems clear, both from Shimizu’s account and from other Meiji references, that no such “club” ever existed. The *yūshokukai* organized by Takenouchi seems to have continued until about 1885, but it was not a toy collector group. It dissolved, according to Shimizu, when too many of the participants began to appear with store-bought dishes, rather than preparing them on their own.

his toys made from his own paintings into in a color woodblock series, entitled *Unai no tomo* (“The Child’s Friends”—that is, toys). The first volume was produced by the woodblock artisan Kimura Tokutarô and sold through the Tokyo bookseller Ôgura Magobei, and although exquisitely crafted, it was priced at only 60 sen. Even so, it sold poorly, so Shimizu was forced to sell most of the 100 copies printed to the up-and-coming Kyoto publisher Unsôdô, which over time came to make a handsome profit on the series [Shimizu 1912:7; Hayashi et al 2010:34-35]. But Shimizu persisted, issuing a second volume ten years later, in 1901, and four more before his death in 1913. Today, *Unai no tomo* is considered both the great classic of modern toy illustration, and a fine example of late Meiji woodblock printing. Shimizu was self-trained as a painter, resulting in a lucid and unselfconscious style that seems especially appropriate to the depiction of toys (Fig. 9). The project was continued after his death by the artist Nishizawa Tekiho (1889-1965), the adopted son of Nishizawa Senko (1864-1914), a famous collector and maker of dolls with whom Starr became well acquainted.



**Fig. 9. Bullfinch (*uso*) figures from different parts of Japan, from Shimizu Seifû, *Unai no tomo*, in *Nihon no omocha* (Geisôdô, 2009), fig. 59.**

## 11. Starr Joins the Network of Japanese Toy Collectors

By the time Starr met him in 1909, Shimizu had become nationally known as the “Doctor of Toys” (“Gangu Hakase,” much as Starr would later be known as “Ofuda

Hakushi”).<sup>11</sup> In his field notes, Starr describes visiting Shimizu at his house on December 13, 1909, together with his interpreter Kajiwara. His notes seem to say that they were going to see the “toy-mad Shimizu”—possibly a slip of the hand when he meant “toy-man,” but one that certainly captures Shimizu’s consuming passion for toys of all sorts. Starr continues:

He lives at the foot of Kanda Myojin hill, in a crowded street in a poor and little house. He was awaiting us. His toys are mostly packed away but he had out his wonderful books, more than 50 of them. He complains and with reason of his publishers who have altered his arrangement. In his original [hand-painted] books he devotes a volume to one subject: thus the ape, fish, shell-objects, fans, writing, tops, kites, etc are each given a separate volume, and all has been done by his own hand. Beautiful coloring and careful detail. There are more than 50 volumes in all. He drew a doll and made a line about it in my album. I stayed until Kajiwara dragged us away and saw only about one third.

Starr’s description of a “poor and little house” reflects the fact that Shimizu’s family shipping business, which had long been run with ox carts, could no longer compete with the new transport modes of trains and steamships, and he sold out his interest in 1895, doubtless having already spent many of his resources on the costs of his toy-collecting pursuits [Shimizu 1913]. The paintings that Starr saw and admired were the original hand paintings that were then made into prints for *Unai no tomo* (of which four volumes had by this time appeared); the “publishers who have altered his arrangement” must refer to Unsôdô. Shimizu appears to have been grateful for Starr’s solicitous attention, for he invited him two days later to dinner and entertainment at a fancy restaurant near Shinbashi, where they were joined by various guests from the Japanese Foreign Office.

It was doubtless also through Shimizu’s good offices that Starr was invited several weeks later to join a meeting on February 25, 1910, of the Ôdomokai, a group of leading toy aficionados that had been formed less than a year earlier, in May 1909, composed largely of members of the Shûkokai. The name of the group, which Starr translated as “Big Babies Club,” is a pun on the word *kodomo*, “[small] children” and as Starr’s version implies, suggested a group of adults growing nostalgic about their childhood. Shimizu was at age 57 the oldest member and the “center of the group,” which “was pre-eminently composed of *those in the know*” [Starr 1921:12; emphasis in the original], while most of the other core figures were in their 30s. As described in the first of several successive reports in the Shûkokai journal [*Shûkokai shi*, vol. 3, 116]:

For any person, there are no memories so pleasant as those of childhood. From the grandest kings and generals to the lowest beggars, all alike must pass through a time of childish innocence. So we gathered in May 1909 at the home of Nishizawa Senko to discuss and study the games, songs, and toys of childhood.

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<sup>11</sup> The readings “hakushi” and “hakase” for 博士 are interchangeable; in Starr’s case, it was always romanized as the former; I take the latter reading for Shimizu from Hayashi et al 2010:colophon.

The meeting to which Starr was invited was the fourth for the group, which like the parent Shûkokai seems to have set themes for display and discussion in advance. As Starr described the meeting:

Our subject was Tenjin, god of letters. In life he was Sugawara Michizane, loyal minister to an ungrateful shogun; . . . today he is worshipped throughout Japan and schoolboys offer their choicest specimens of handwriting at his shrine. Shimizu San had hung a *kakemono* in the alcove, on which were painted the wooden bullfinches given out at different Tenjin shrines. . . . [See Fig. 9 for examples from *Unai no tomo*.] The figures from each shrine differ from those of others in some peculiarity of whittling or color. At our meeting specimens of these wood bullfinches were shown, and toy figures of Tenjin himself, some of them quaint and old; his famous black bullock, faithful unto death, came into consideration; . . . and his plum tree, his plum *mon* or crest, and his fame as a calligrapher came up for conversation or illustration. [Starr 1921:14-15]

The report on the meeting in the Shûkokai journal, however, was rather laconic, reporting the presence of only four members in addition to Starr (and, presumably, his interpreter Kajiwara)—but those four were in fact, as Starr described them, the “four great lights” of the Ôdomokai: Shimizu, Nishizawa Senko, Hayashi Wakaki, and Hirose Tatsugorô (1878-1946, the owner of the Edo *chiyogami* decorated paper store Isetatsu). The report continues,

On that day, the theme was Tenjin-*kô* [the annual festival held in honor of Tenjin on February 25, the death memorial of Michizane], so we had agreed to talk about Tenjin-*kô* and *terakoya* schools [where Tenjin was regularly worshipped on that day], but since many were absent, the center of the meeting focused on much casual conversation with our visitor, the American Dr. Starr, so no record was kept. [*Shûkokai shi*, vol. 3, p. 153]

Apparently Starr was a greater attraction than even Tenjin, and the guest reciprocated by inviting the membership to his own rented house in Nishikata-chô for the next meeting, which took place on April 19. Attendance was considerably better this time, with seven members in addition to Starr and his interpreter. Appearing for the first time at an Ôdomokai meeting was the distinguished writer, artist, and collector Awashima Kangetsu [1859-1926], a classic *haisha* type of prosperous Edokko lineage.<sup>12</sup> This time the published record of the meeting (made by Nishizawa Senko in the absence from illness of the usual secretary, Hayashi Wakaki) was more detailed, focusing on Awashima’s discussion of the history of outdoor games for boys in the Tokyo area.

By the time of Starr’s next visit to Japan in late 1911, Shimizu was already ailing from esophageal cancer. Following his death in July 1913, a project was launched to raise funds for a stone memorial to be placed in his family temple of Myôhōji in the Sugamo area of Tokyo; it was dedicated in April, 1917, and a rubbing of it appears in Starr’s 1926 article on Japanese toys and toy collectors (Fig. 10). The central image is a finely detailed *nehanzu* of Seifû, showing him dying as the Buddha died, surrounded by a multitude of—in this case—

<sup>12</sup> See Starr 1926:111 for an admiring description of Awashima (who died in the year that Starr was writing) and his paintings of his own toys. Yamaguchi 1995:99-170 provides detailed portraits of Awashima Kangetsu and his eccentric father Chingaku as classic *haisha*.



Fig. 10. Rubbing of memorial to Shimizu Seifû, Myôhōji temple, Tokyo, 1917. Starr 1926, facing p. 102

his favorite toys, mourning the loss, and backed by a folding screen; in columns to the right and left are engraved the names of the 94 donors.<sup>13</sup> The image recalls, and may possibly have been inspired by, the famous *nehanzu* painting of Matsuura Takeshirō by Kawanabe Kyōsai (started during Takeshirō’s lifetime in 1880, but finished only in 1886, four years after his death), which features a group of toys to the lower right (Fig. 11). Starr saw this “astounding production” in person when he visited Takeshirō’s grandson Magota on May 3, 1910, and described it in detail both in his field notes and then in his 1916 biography of Takeshirō [Starr 1916:12]. In his notes, he wrote “Below are grouped toys and [illeg], all of things which were his favorites; among the medley the black wooden horse of Oshu is conspicuous.” Clearly toys were of special significance to Matsuura.

In addition to his involvement with the Ôdomokai, Starr seems to have developed a special interest in 1909-10 in a particular and widely collected sub-category of toys (as the Japanese broadly defined them), that of dolls, particularly the ritualistic *hina* dolls that

<sup>13</sup> For a very useful table of the names of all the donors, and basic information about them, see Hayashi et al 2010, pp. 170-77.



**Fig. 11. Kawanabe Kyōsai, *nehanzu* of Matsuura Takeshirō, 1884, detail of bottom of painting. Matsuura Takeshirō Memorial Museum.**

were made for display at the March 3 festival of *hina-matsuri*. Within the Ôdomokai, the recognized authority in this area was Nishizawa Senko (mentioned above), about whom Starr wrote in detail in his 1921 article [Starr 1921:15-17]. Starr learned of Nishizawa's custom of making twenty sets of identical male-female pairs of *hina* dolls for presentation to his closest friends every New Year, each year "strikingly different and unusual." This inspired Starr to consult with Nishizawa to help create twenty such pairs for Starr himself to present to those Japanese to whom he had become most indebted in the course of his stay in Japan in 1909-10. Starr's bizarre innovation was that:

The male doll is intended to be my portrait; in ancient ceremonial dress, there are details in the decoration that show not only that I am an American but the representative of my nation. The female is also in ceremonial dress, but it too shows that she is conceived not as an individual Japanese, but as a national representative. Twenty pairs were made and great was my satisfaction, until a discriminating critic wondered that a bachelor should have a pair of *hina*. He was correct in his criticism; it was incongruous. It might have been excused in one who knew nothing of the inner meaning of the dolls' festival.

Starr's interest in Japanese toys would continue, as was clear from a newspaper article in May, 1921, on his tenth trip to Japan in 1921 (the same article that described him as "fluent" in Japanese) [*Yomiuri shinbun* 1921]. Starr had just come back from a trip to Korea, where he had gathered many toys, and he explained that throughout the world, toys had stories and legends behind them, and that the toys that most interested him were the precisely the local ones with local stories—a characterization wholly in line with both his own instincts as an ethnographer, and with the emphasis of what was then a rapidly growing Japanese interest in such "local toys" (*kyōdo gangu*). This was an appellation that had only recently become current as the primary focus of toy collectors, although the emphasis itself was already obvious in the work of Shimizu Seifū and his fellow members of the Ôdomokai. Starr said

that he now had some 2000 Japanese toys, of 750 types, many of which had been presented as gifts. He also announced that on his return to Chicago late in the spring, he planned to hold an exhibition of Japanese and Korean toys. (Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to find any reports of such an exhibition, nor of the fate of Starr's large collection of toys.)

As for the Ôdomokai itself, only one more meeting was to follow that at Starr's place, held on August 1, 1910, at Shimizu Seifû's house. This fifth meeting proved the last, perhaps because the format was felt to duplicate too closely that of the Shûkokai, of which most were also members. Instead, the group decided to sponsor annual toy and doll exhibitions, the first being held in November 1911 at the Seiryûtei restaurant in Kanda, the usual meeting place of the Shûkokai itself, with each Ôdomokai member offering one prized item for display. Such annual exhibitions continued for eight years, the final one held in 1919 [Hayashi et al 2010:51-3]. The meeting place moved from private clubs to Mitsukoshi Department Store from 1914, where the exhibitions of old dolls would be joined with the selling of new ones. Thus the Ôdomokai was transformed after barely a year of operation as a very private discussion and display club, into an organization dedicated to spreading public interest in toys. It was a mark of the new Taisho era and its growing consumerism.

## 12. Starr's Writings on Japanese Toys and Toy Collectors

Starr himself, meanwhile, went on to produce two important articles dealing in part or in whole with Japanese toy collecting. The first was a pamphlet published in Chicago in 1921 and designed for a general audience, entitled *Japanese Collectors and What They Collect*. Although overtly dealing with Japanese collectors in general, almost one-half was devoted to toy collectors, and another one-fourth to collectors of *nôsatsu* and match box labels (another genre of collecting that intrigued Starr). But his far more detailed and scholarly analysis came in his 1926 article on "Japanese Toys and Toy Collectors" [Starr 1926]. Here for the first time, he engaged in the complex and revealing conundrum of exactly what constituted a "Japanese toy," a matter that has been analyzed in detail by the French anthropologist Josef Kyburz, who places special emphasis on Starr's insights [Kyburz 1994].

Starr never touched on the equivalent Japanese words for "toy," but he himself would have been intimately familiar with both the standard "*omocha*" and the more formal "*gangu*" (the latter being the one universally used by modern collectors). But both words were basically the same in meaning; the problem lay rather in the scope of that meaning in comparison with the English "toy." Starr started his article by making this initial grouping among Japanese-style "toys":

- A. "Traditional, local toys," often from remote villages, and "often coarse and crude in workmanship, gaudy in coloring, simple and infantile in conception. They are intensely interesting as exhibiting psychology and art tendencies." This is the only type of toy in which the Japanese collectors are interested.



- B. “Standardized, widely distributed toys,” which are produced in quantity and “largely machine made, . . . displacing the hand-made, traditional toys.” Such toys “carry a deadening uniformity to all parts. They discourage local ingenuity and taste.”
- C. “Export toys,” which are made to suit foreign demand, and “may or may not embody Japanese ideas.” Starr related seeing in Mexico what appeared to be an ingenious local toy of a spider, only to discover that it was created and manufactured in Japan.

Starr then goes on to make a crucial observation, that the Japanese “use the word toy . . . with an extreme latitude and in their collections, they include much that we would not consider toys.” As evidence, he offers a second classification that is even more revealing, now using religion as a primary axis of differentiation [emphasis in the original]:<sup>14</sup>

- 1) “*Toys proper*, made to use in play, or to give a momentary pleasure.”
- 2) “*Objects*, more or less intended for children’s pleasure, but *somewhat related to temples and shrines*.”
- 3) “*Objects definitely religious*, possessing inherent virtue as protectors or charms. These are sold from temples and shrines and are not in the least intended for play. They may be odd or pretty, but are surely not toys in our use of the word.”

In his subsequent discussion, Starr first insists that groups 1) and 2) in this list “will be but little touched on and only when the toy-idea is prominent.” By “toy-idea,” Starr makes it clear that he conceives of “toy” in its English sense, as an ideal type, objects that are intended purely for practical *play*, and basically for children. He appears to be dismissive of objects with religious, magical, or indeed any symbolic significance. This is a confusing and in the end contradictory stance, when Starr knew full well, and himself deeply appreciated, the pervasive symbolic and religious connotations of the majority of “Japanese” toys, those that were termed “*omocha*” or “*gangu*.” Indeed, when Starr next proceeds to a list of “some types and classes of Japanese toys,” it turns out that at least half of them do in fact have clearly symbolic or religious meanings. Most conclusive is the final of his nine “types,” namely “the ‘toys’ which are no toys, but where magical, curative, protective, or luck-bringing powers are the real motive of securing and keeping them.”

Josef Kyburz in his important 1994 analysis of what constitutes a Japanese “*omocha*” makes virtually the same distinction as Starr, between a purely practical function of “ludic” play for children, and a “symbolic” function that moves the *omocha* into the “conceptual universe of the adult.” Kyburz’s analysis is more lucid and consistent than Starr’s, but in the end he basically reaches the conclusion that is in fact already evident from Starr’s own confusion, namely that the Japanese conception of “*omocha*” inherently rejects any firm distinction between the “practical play” of the child, and the “religious symbolism” of the adult. Whether *omocha* or *gangu*, Starr’s own concrete descriptions of Japanese toys, as well

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<sup>14</sup> Starr actually provides a fourth group, that of the votive pictures known as *ema*, on which he himself had written an important article in 1920 in *TASJ* [Starr 1920], but he immediately dismisses them as toys, because they “have no relation to childlife.” Kyburz devotes a long note to the complexities of this issue (Kyburz 1994:n.6).

as his own collecting instincts, confirmed his fundamental insight that Japanese collectors “use the word toy with an extreme latitude.” What he failed to articulate is that the Japanese did not in fact “use the word toy” at all, but rather a different terminology that simply failed to correspond to the English “toy” precisely by its inherent inclusion of countless objects that could or were intended to possess “religious” powers. It should be added that “religion” here should be understood in the sense of “practically religious,” as put forth by Ian Reader and George Tanabe, who argue persuasively that the “common religion” of Japan is focused on the pursuit of “worldly benefits” (*genze riyaku*) [Reader and Tanabe 1994]. And the Japanese objects known as “*omocha*” tend pervasively to take on the power to confer such benefits, which in turn is critical to understanding their appeal to Japanese collectors. This is not to dismiss the quality of numerous Japanese toys as objects for child’s play, which also was clearly a lure for adult collectors (such as the “Big Babies” of the Ôdomokai). But the two qualities were never sharply separated, although the rationalist bent of Starr’s mind compelled him to do so even when he knew in his heart, and proved in his practice, that this was not really the case.

In the latter one-third of Starr’s 1926 article (pp. 110-15), he turns from toys to consider toy collectors themselves. He first provides information about the great collectors whom he had first met in 1909-10, such as Shimizu Seihô, Nishizawa Senko, and Awashima Kangetsu—all of whom had died by the time he was writing. He also describes younger collectors he had met in the meantime, such as Arisaka Yotarô (1896-1965) (Fig. 12), whose two-volume *Nihon gangu shi* of 1931-32 would become a classic reference work on Japanese folk toys, and Kido Chûtarô (1871-1959), whose obsession with Daruma figures would result in his 928-page magnum opus of 1932, *Daruma to sono shosô*. (Fig. 13, from Starr’s article, shows the interior of the Daruma Hall in Kyoto that Kido build for his huge collection.)

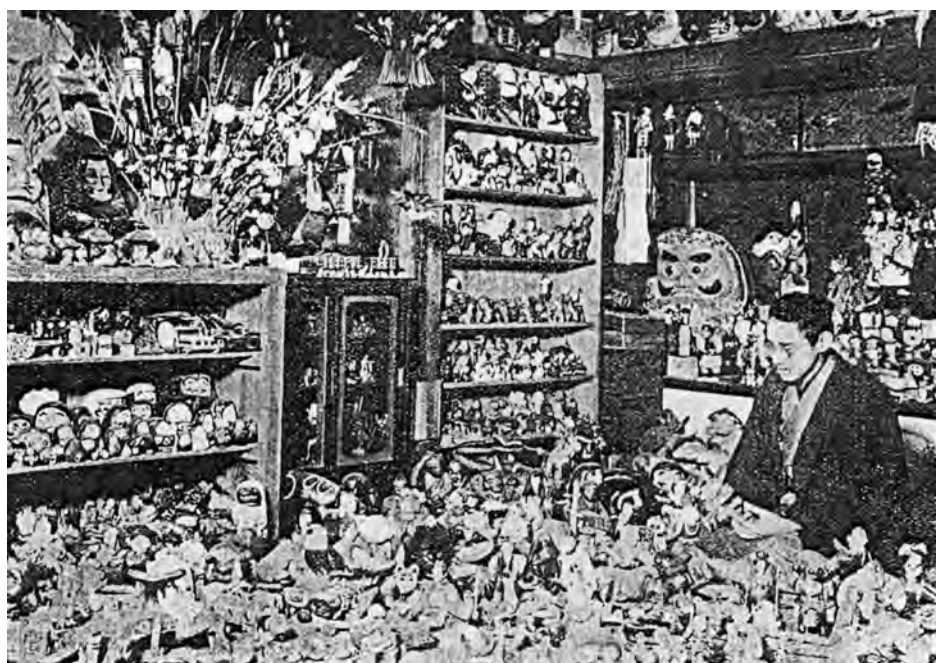


Fig. 12. Arisaka Yotarô among his toys. Starr 1926, facing p. 108.



**Fig. 13. Interior of Kido Chûtarô's Daruma Hall, Kyoto. Starr 1926, facing p. 112.**

Starr also touched on the proliferation of societies of toy collectors, beginning with the Ôdomokai in which he had participated, and moving on to Arisaka's then-current activities in Tokyo, as well as those of Tanaka Ryokko in Kyoto. Starr also made note of the central importance of the production of paintings of their toys by such leading collectors as Shimizu Seifû, Awashima Kangetsu, and more recently Nishizawa Tekiho, Kawazaki Kyosen in Osaka, and Sugino Kuhei of Takamatsu. He also observed that now, three years after the great Kanto Earthquake that destroyed so many great collections, "exhibitions of toys due to artistic, folklorist, or collection interest are common and probably no year passes without a notable exhibition of toys at one or another of the great department stores" [Starr 1926:113]. In short, the kind of toy collection and exhibition to which Starr had first been exposed in 1909-10 had now, fifteen years later, greatly expanded as he wrote what constituted the first systematic account of Japanese toys and toy collecting in English, and surely the first in any language with a truly ethnographic perspective.

### **13. Starr's Discovery of the Nôsatsukai, and Its Pre-History**

The Nosatsu Kai stands for much to me. Its quaint combination of piety and sociability, its symbolism, its art, are charming; it continues in full practice, in living custom, the fine old color-printing and the principles of the *ukiyoye*; it is not revival, or reproduction; it is the original, unchanged, persisting.

Frederick Starr, "The Nosatsu Kai," *TASJ*, 45:1 (1917), p. 22.

Paralleling his involvement with toy collectors, Frederick Starr in his 1909-10 research trip became equally involved in the Nôsatsukai, and he would remain deeply interested in

both and go on to write highly original articles about them. His article on the Nôtsukai appeared in 1916, fully ten years earlier than did the one on toys; like all of his most scholarly writings on Japan, it was first presented as a lecture to the Asiatic Society of Japan, shortly after appearing in the group's *Transactions*. As with his paper on Matsuura Takeshirô the previous year in the same publication, it was the first detailed report on the topic in English, and remains so today. It was based both on Japanese documents and on Starr's personal participation in numerous of the monthly meetings of the Nôtsukai, and even in Japanese, it has only recently been superseded, but at that, only for the Edo-period history when the term "*senjafuda*" came into being [Takiguchi 2008]. The new Meiji-Taisho phase, in which Starr himself was intimately involved, remains unstudied.

It is particularly interesting to compare Starr's interest and involvement in toys and *nôtsu*. In certain respects, they were rather similar. Both were almost entirely unknown to other foreigners in Japan at the time, although none could have avoided noticing these two classes of objects if they just kept their eyes open at most any temple or shrine. Both involved groups of avid collectors that had regular meetings in order to display and discuss the objects that they collected, and in which Starr himself participated. Both collected objects with at least moderately strong religious connotations. Both were democratic in spirit, taking in participants from a diverse range of occupations. And both looked back with nostalgia to a "traditional" Japan that was in fact still quite recent and in many ways alive although increasingly threatened, that of late Edo period.

And yet the contrasts are every bit as revealing as the similarities. The toy collectors, even though their personal origins and inclinations tended to be specifically rooted in the city of Edo-Tokyo, prized objects from all over Japan and in particular those with a local flavor—although local does not necessarily mean rural, since most "folk toys" were produced for markets around large shrines and temples, often in or near former castle towns. The practice of the *nôtsu* groups had its roots in votive offerings to temples on pilgrimage circuits, but the more specialized practice in which Starr participated was wholly a product of late Edo culture, rooted in the woodblock printing craft of that city, although it did later spread to the Osaka area. Whereas both types of collectors may have been socially diverse, the average socioeconomic level of the *nôtsu* groups was decidedly lower and more artisanal than the toy collectors and antiquarians of the Shûkokai and Ôdomokai.

And finally, the core nature of both the objects they collected and the related religious associations were very different. Toys were essentially unsophisticated local crafts, made by anonymous artisans for an anonymous audience, but they were typically purveyed by shrines and temples as objects with amuletic powers. So toys were basically things that were purchased on the market. *Nôtsu*, by contrast, originated in votive plaques offered to shrines and temples, rather than being acquired from them. And one critical consequence of this difference was that the *nôtsu* were produced by those who made the offerings, who—far from anonymous—made a point of displaying their personal names on the placards. In time, as we shall see, the physical production of the placards was turned over to professional woodblock artisans, and there quickly emerged collectors of the *nôtsu* of others, although

mostly through personal exchange. To understand how this worked, let us quickly review the history of *nôsatsu*, much as Starr himself presented it in 1916.

The offering of votive placards has its beginning, according to *nôsatsu* legend, with the retired emperor Kazan (968-1008), who in 987, the year his retirement as ruling emperor at the age of twenty, had a vision from the god of the Kumano shrines to establish a 33-temple Kannon pilgrimage, which he did with the advice of a priest. In the *nôsatsu* variant of this legend, Kazan wrote a *waka* on a poem card and offered it at Kowakadera, one of the temples on the circuit, which became the first *nôsatsu* or “offered placard.” It was probably in the medieval period that there emerged a practice still found even today, of using a sword-shaped thin wooden placard to inscribe on one side the Sanskrit symbols for the Amida triad at the top, and then the name of the site, date of visit, and the native place and name of the pilgrim. On the other side was inscribed the phrase “Namu Daihi Kanzeon Bosatsu,” together with the benefits hoped to be attained from Kannon. The placard would then be attached with a nail (hence the term “to strike a placard” [*fuda o utsu*] for the act of offering), and the practice became so common that the actual temples on the Kannon circuits came to be known as the *fudasho*, “placard sites” [Sekikoka 1977:2]. The oldest surviving *nôsatsu*, from the temple of Ishiyamadera, is dated 1507, and Starr in his article illustrated one made of copper, from the same temple and dated 1546 (Fig. 14). The practice of traveling the Kannon temple circuits (which themselves proliferated in all parts of Japan) became even more widespread, and with it the custom of offering *ofuda*, “honorable placards” (as Starr translated the term).



Fig. 14. Copper *nôsatsu*, Ishiyamadera, 1546. Starr 1917, fig. 4.

It was in the city of Edo from about the 1760s, however, that a very different kind of *nôsatsu* began to emerge, using placards that bore only the personal name of the offerer, and no special signs of religious dedication. Moreover, these were pasted onto random surfaces at various heights, as shown in their earliest known depiction, in a view of the interior of Asakusa Kannon temple, from a printed book illustrated by the ukiyo-e artist Shigemasa (Fig. 15). In this depiction, some of the visitors make incense offerings in the large censer to the right, while others look up to the huge *ema* to the upper left of the gunner Inaba Tarô, while a woman to the lower left wears a cloth strip that describes itself as an “offertory *fuda*” for regional pilgrimage circuits. And on each of the two pillars are pasted three *nôsatsu*, one of those on the right slightly overlaying another to give a sense of competitive edge. And indeed competition was to become a major theme of *nôsatsu* pasting over the next sixty years of the great boom that lasted until the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when it abruptly collapsed in the wave of government persecution of Buddhism (*haibutsu kishaku*).



**Fig. 15. Inside the Kannon-dô at Asakusa Sensôji temple, *Ehon Azuma no hana*, 1768, showing *nôsatsu* pasted on pillars. Takiguchi 2008, p. 16.**

The act of pasting seems to have merged with a type of pilgrimage practice known as *senja-mairi*,<sup>15</sup> the virtuous act of visiting one thousand different shrines, which in the city of Edo surely meant Inari shrines, of which there was one in virtually every residential lot and samurai mansion. The actual term “*senja-fuda*” did not appear in a text until a bakufu edict of 1799 sought to control both the religious clubs (*kô*) that had come to be organized for the purpose of pasting, and the act of “widely pasting ‘*senja no fuda*’” [Takiguchi 2008:19]. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the competition among clubs had become intense, with one group sometimes tearing down the placards of their rivals, or pasting directly over them—acts that would be prohibited in an 1858 text as contrary to *nôsatsu* etiquette [Sekioka 1977:37-8].

<sup>15</sup> Sekioka 1977:2 notes that “*senshafuda*” is the reading that was preferred by many modern practitioners, but “*senjafuda*” has now become standard. Both appear, with a slight preference for the former, as *furigana* in newspaper articles in the Taisho period.

Another practice promoted by such competition was the effort to paste in very high places, where no one had pasted before and which would be difficult to remove or overlap. To this end, a complicated pasting tool was developed (according to legend, by Tengû Kôhei [1716-1817], a highly eccentric samurai who is said to have been active in pasting from the 1770s and in the modern period came to be seen as the patron saint of the Nôsetsukai), known as the *tsugisao*. It was a long bamboo pole (typically in extensible sections for easy transport), with a ingenious device at the end known as the “double brushes” (literally, “husband-wife brush” or “*meoto-bake*”), one to hold the placard to which paste had been applied, and the other with which to smooth it over. See Fig. 16 for a two pasters in action, one in the late Edo period at the Daimon gate of Asakusa Kannon (as depicted by the Tachô, whom we have already encountered as the originator of the “dinner party” club that led to the famous “hobby horse dinner” of 1880), and the other a dapper Taisho period paster, from the *Nôsetsu taikan* [Nôsetsukai ed 1911:11]. The *meoto-bake* is more clearly visible in the latter.



Fig. 16. Nôsetsu pasters at (right) Asakusa Kannon temple, late Edo period, by Tachô [Starr 1926 fig. 13], and (right) Taisho era [Nôsetsukai 1911, p. 11].

As Starr outlined in his article on the Nôatsukai, the *nôatsu* practice evolved in stages, from a) “pious offerings left at temples by pilgrims,” to b) the development of an interest by those making such offerings in “the slips left by others” [an astute behavioral observation], then to c) when “those who were collecting *nôatsu*, anxious to increase their collections, exchanged with others for placards . . . not in their possession,” and finally to d) “exchange on a large scale . . . at meetings [where] special *nôatsu* with elaborate and beautiful designs . . . were made for the occasion.” He further noted that while all four stages were successive in *nôatsu* history, “all four still continue.”

This particular scheme is characteristic of Starr, with its emphasis on the act of collection. The current Japanese view (Takiguchi 2008:75, after Sekioka 1977) is more broadly sociological, seeing a progression from individual pasting, to group exchanges of personal *nôatsu*, and finally to the production of *nôatsu* by the groups themselves. But this simply reinforces the crucial point made by Starr on the second page of his 1916 *TASJ* article, that there are two basic phases of *nôatsu* activity—“pasting and exchange.” The pasting came first historically, with individuals moving about outdoors from one place to another pasting their placards, on to the critical innovation of late Edo, particularly in the early nineteenth century, of moving *indoors* to regular meetings of organized groups devoted to discussion and exchange of personal *nôatsu*. In the Edo period, such groups were known as *ren*, and their joint placards as *ren-fuda*. They tended to be small and independent groups, and would be replaced in the Meiji revival of the late nineteenth century by a central national organization, the Nôatsukai, and its various branches in Kansai and elsewhere.

At the same time, large *nôatsu* gatherings came to be held in the late Edo period, combining various *ren* into one large event. Starr in his article offered a detail from a print by Hiroshige of such a meeting that gives a sense of the throngs involved (Fig. 17), while a



Fig. 17. Hiroshige, “great meeting” of *nôatsu* groups, late 1850s; Starr 1917, fig. 16.



small detail of a print by Ômafû, a major *nôsatsu* designer of the age, depicting a summer “great gathering” (*ôgai*) in 1859 (Fig. 18), reveals how deeply involved and excited those gathered might become. It remains only to be noted that in what became the golden age of late Edo period *nôsatsu*, during the decade and slightly more following the great Ansei Fire of 1854 and the subsequent orgy of rebuilding (which greatly enriched various of the artisans who were the primary practitioners of *nôsatsu*), the artistic qualities of the placards themselves reached a zenith of design and printing technique. The glory of the latter being only detectable in color, I offer here simply a sample in monochrome of various designs by Tachô (Fig. 19). These reveal the degree to which *nôsatsu* by this stage was an astonishingly inventive form of calligraphy, as the diversity of this assortment reveals.



Fig. 18. Detail of 1859 mass meeting of *nôsatsu* groups, by Ômafû. Sekioka 1977, fig 2.



Fig. 19. *Nôsatsu* designs by Tachô, in various calligraphic styles. Sekioka 1977, fig. 6.

#### 14. Starr's Involvement with the Nôsetsukai

“Nosatsu definitely attracted my attention the first time that I visited Asakusa,” as Starr opened his 1917 article, continuing that “everywhere we saw slips of paper bearing printed characters pasted up at gateways, shrines, and temples, . . . in inaccessible corners, plastered in quantities on miserable little shrines.” The date of this “first time” must have been his first visit to Japan in early 1904 to assemble the Ainu group, since by the time of his return for real research in September 1909, he headed straight to Asakusa. He then quickly became acquainted with the Nôsetsukai, making direct contact with its leader, Ôta Setchô.<sup>16</sup> I have been unable to uncover almost any biographical information about Ôta, including his dates, although he was probably at least in his early 40s when Starr met him in 1909. Starr writes in his history of the Nôsetsukai that the Meiji revival of Edo-style *nôsetsu* began with a meeting at a tea-house in the Shin-Yoshiwara pleasure quarter in November, 1880, but that “interest waned at times” until finally Ôta himself held a meeting a decade later, on November 23, 1890, at the house of one “Sawata Nagyen.” This was followed in turn in August, 1893, by a “famous meeting” at a tea-house in the Fukagawa district, and “from that time onward, the society has flourished and held regular meetings, some of which recall the famous days of Ansei [in the late 1850s]” [Starr 1917:9]. By 1897, the society was so successful that its members were able to install a large stone monument (*tsuka*) commemorating its activities at Chômeiji temple in the Mukôjima district of Tokyo (Fig. 20).



**Fig. 20. Nôsetsu monument at Chômeiji temple, Tokyo, 1897. Starr 1917, fig. 20.**

<sup>16</sup> The reading of Ôta's art name (*gô*), written “櫛朝,” is given as “Setcho” by Starr, a reading that is confirmed by *furigana* in at least one newspaper article: “Senjafuda no shûshû,” in the series ‘Monozuki meimeiden’ (no. 28), *Asahi shinbun*, February 7, 1910, p. 5. The standard *on* reading for the first character, however is *shitsu*, and “Ôta Shitchô” is the reading provided for the name by the National Diet Library and other bibliographic databases; no character dictionary gives the reading “*setsu*.” Morohashi's *Dai kanwa jiten*, however, does cite the possible usage for 櫛 “in place of” 節 (「節に通ず」), which is read “*setsu*.” For a *nôsetsu* design, it is also a more appealingly complex character; see Fig. 21 for a *nôsetsu* of Setchô.

Whatever the role of Ôta Setchô in this *nôsatsu* revival of the early 1890s, he was head of the Nôsatsukai and clearly the dominant figure in the movement by the time that Starr met him in the fall of 1909, and seems to have remained so at least through the Taisho period. Ôta was the “chief author” (*shuhitsu*) of *Nôsatsu kaikan*, a beautifully detailed and well-illustrated book bound in traditional Japanese style that was published by the Nôsatsukai in June, 1911; Starr describes it as “the best book on the subject.” The friendship between Starr and Ôta is suggested by the appearance of examples of their personal *nôsatsu* (recalling that all practitioners had many personal *nôsatsu*, since a different one was made for each meeting) side by side as an illustration in Starr’s article (Fig. 21). In addition, Ôta designed a large and impressive woodblock portrait of Starr (Fig. 22), dated February 21, 1917 (not long after Starr had arrived in Japan for his sixth visit). In the portrait, Starr appears in formal Japanese dress, with his five-pointed “star” crest, seated in *seiza* position.



**Fig 21. *Nôsatsu* of Ôta Setchô (left) and Frederick Starr (right)**

Perhaps the most valuable part of Starr’s account of the Nôsatsukai is his first-hand description of the meetings, something that few of the Japanese participants would be likely to record. He seems to have been so close to the group that he was included in a “small



A TESTIMONIAL PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR

Ota Setcho Had This Print Made to Acknowledge the Services of His "Like-Minded" Friend from Chicago, to the Nosatsu-Kai

Fig. 22. Portrait of Frederick Starr by Ôta Setchô, 1917. Starr 1921a, p. 117.

special meeting," of which he includes a photograph in his article (Fig. 23). Here, however, he describes the general procedure for regular meetings, which is worth quoting at length:

The monthly meetings of the Nosatsu kai are held at evening; a hall or gathering-place is rented for the occasion, and it is expected that the proprietor of the house will serve simple refreshment [such] as tea and cakes or sweet potatoes to the members. As each member enters the room, he pays a fee of thirty *sen* and receives a wooden tablet which serves as his receipt and indicates his right to receive the *nosatsu* which are to be distributed that evening; he also leaves with the secretary at the door a bundle of his own *nosatsu*, in number as many as the probable attendance at the meeting; the members distribute themselves in little groups around the room and spend the evening in conversation, examining collections, and taking refreshments; as the hour for adjournment nears, the members seat themselves upon the floor in long lines that face each other, leaving a passageway between; each person puts down upon the floor before him his wooden tablet, to show his right to receive exchange; a number of ushers now

pass rapidly up and down the lines with the packages of *nosatsu* which have been left by all the members and distribute them one of each to each person; when the distribution has been fully made, every person has received a *nosatsu* from each and everyone of the members present.



**Fig. 23. A “special” meeting of the Nôsetsukai, with Frederick Starr and his interpreter Maebashi Hanbei to the right. Date unknown. Starr 1917, fig. 3.**

A detail (Fig. 24) from an excellent illustration in *Nôsetsu kaikan* shows the process at work, with the secretary in the far room writing out receipts, and the ushers in the foreground distributing the *nôsetsu* to the members aligned in two facing rows.

Starr goes on to add that the Nôsetsukai meetings were not simply given over to casual conversation and the mechanical distribution of *nôsetsu*, but that the “meetings . . . vary and a constant effort is made to introduce novelties.” Much as with the Shûkokai meetings, a particular theme was set for specific meetings, around which the individual *nôsetsu* would be designed; Starr gives examples of *hagoita* battledores, or the cyclical animal of the calendar, or the god of fortune Daikoku, or such national events as a victorious battle in the war with Russia, or Kyoto palace dolls in honor of the enthronement of the Taisho emperor in November 1915. “The devising of new and striking designs, in harmony with time-honored standards,” Starr observed, “is far from easy. Much ingenuity and effort are expressed in the effort towards originality and timeliness.” Starr also notes that:

Commemorative meetings may be held in honor of deceased members, when religious services are conducted; exchange meetings are sometimes held in combination with

cherry-blossom parties or boating trips; sometimes singing girls and music enliven the occasion.



**Fig. 24. Detail from illustration of a regular meeting of the Nōsatsukai.  
Nōsatsukai 1911, p.11.**

Starr also noted, with characteristic immodesty, that meetings were occasionally held in his own honor, the first such in May, 1910, when the theme was traditional toys, since the members knew of his interest in the topic. (We will recall that it was just in the previous month that Starr has hosted the Ôdomokai toy collectors' meeting at his own house in Tokyo.) His fame for producing his own *nōsatsu*, pasting them on shrines and temples as he traveled, and distributing them as a form of calling card, was to grow over the following years, and by at least late 1915, when he walked the length of the Tokaido highway with constant press attention, he had already been dubbed “Ofuda Hakushi,” which would remain his popular title until his death. Starr was not only a participant in the Nōsatsukai, but one of its most powerful proselytizers, and indeed, himself an important chapter in its history, for which he was justly feted in return. In March 1918, the Kansai Nōsatsukai held a welcome for Starr on his eighth trip to Japan, followed by one in Tokyo. As Starr himself wrote in 1921, “it was a red-letter day on which probably my stock went to its highest record; . . . 250 persons were present, each with an honorable-placard commemorative of the occasion, for exchange.” And probably as equally flattering to Starr was the publication in April, 1921, of a translation into Japanese of his 1917 article “The Nosatsu Kai,” under the title *Nōsatsu shi*, the “history of *nōsatsu*” [Starr 1921c].

For Starr, however, his participation in the Nôtsatsukai was far more than just another way to garner public attention, for he seems to have genuinely enjoyed the social experience of the meetings, and the “democratic quality” that he felt to be a “striking feature” of the group. As he wrote in 1917:

On few other occasions in Japan do all meet on such terms of equality. Few of social position attend the meetings, and many from the lower walks of life; but there are and always have been some superior men in attendance. At the first meeting I attended, impressed by the diversity, we made an enumeration . . . . Among those present were a renting-agent, sign-maker, letter-writer, *tokoroten*-seller, brush-maker, soy-seller, painter, lantern-maker, copyist, poet, *sushi*-seller, fireman, carpenter, maker of thongs for *geta*, artist, editor, green-grocer, charcoal seller. Where else in Tokyo . . . could one find such an aggregation come together on terms of absolute equality?

This kind of “horizontal” organization certainly seems to reflect what Yamaguchi Masao sees as characteristic of “*haisha*” society, wholly different from the bureaucratic hierarchies of official Japan. It should be noted, however, that the social level was definitely on the average lower than that of the Shûkokai, although the two groups shared a number of members. The Shûkokai, as seen in the previous quote from Yagi Shôzaburô, was also diverse and had a number of tradesmen, but they tended to be of a more wealthy sort than those in the Nôtsatsukai.

As Starr concluded his article, “I find among Japanese of high station”—a group that would very likely have included numerous members of the Shûkokai—“a ready tolerance of my interest in the Nosatsu Kai. All who *know*, appreciate it as a survival of a genuine old Yedo institution. . . . The Nosatsu Kai has taught me more of Old Yedo life and thought than all else combined.” He further described the group, in a telling phrase that might be applied more broadly to the entire world of Taisho collectors and antiquarians with whom Starr so frequently associated, as “a quaint combination of piety and sociability.”

## 10. Epilogue: Starr’s Later Years in Japan

In June, 1923, the year he reached the age of 65, Frederick Starr retired from the University of Chicago. Numerous parties were held, and his students presented him with a substantial amount of money that enabled to buy him a house in Seattle, “a location convenient for his frequent trips to Japan” [Cole 1935]. He told a reporter on the occasion that “I must say that I not only expect to live to be 120, but that I definitely will live to 120. It is written in my destiny” [*The Washington Post*, June 19, 1923, p. 14]. As usual, Starr could be counted on to provide a provocative quote for the press.

By this time, Starr had made ten trips to Japan, and clearly intended to make many more. His very next trip, however, in the late summer of the same year, proved ill-fated, for less than three weeks after his arrival in Japan, the Great Kanto Earthquake struck the city of Tokyo where he was staying in his customary inn, the Kinokuniya in the Shiba district. He had announced before his departure that the purpose of his trip was to study the terrain of Mt.

Fuji, and early American press reports suggested that he might have died in the earthquake. He later reported, however, that he had been led from his inn (which seems to have survived the quake, if not the subsequent fires) by a young boy to the nearby temple of Zôjôji, where he was able to climb to protection at the top of a hill.<sup>17</sup> Because of the earthquake, “with other foreigners, he was evacuated from the country as soon as could be” [Statler 1983: 250].

Perhaps because of the trauma of the earthquake, or worry about returning to a Tokyo still in ruins, Starr did not visit Japan again for another three years, until the autumn of 1926, for a trip of almost four months. But after that a long interval again ensued until his thirteenth trip in the spring of 1930. He took another two-month trip in the summer of 1932, and left for what would be his final trip in mid-June, 1933. As he had done several times in the past, he made a side trip to Korea, where he was stricken with intestinal disease and immediately returned to Tokyo, where he entered St. Luke’s Hospital on the evening of August 11. He contracted pneumonia early the next morning, and his condition suddenly worsened two days later. He died on the evening of August 14 at the age of 75. His remains were cremated, and his ashes placed near the foot of Mt. Fuji, where a monumental gravestone was erected a year later by various of his assistants and friends in the Nôsetsukai (Fig. 25). It may still be seen there today.



**Fig. 25. Undated postcard of Starr monument at Subashiri, Shizuoka Pref., erected 1934. Photograph courtesy of Miyatake Kimio.**

<sup>17</sup> This account is from the *The New York Times*, October 1, 1923. Statler 1983:249 gives a more detailed account of Starr’s experience in the earthquake, and probably more reliable, saying that “his inn moved him to the nearest large park.” I suspect that Starr provided the little boy to make a better story for the press.



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