

## KASHIGATA (Wooden Sweet Molds) 和寂堂



WaSabiDou has recently acquired a wonderful collection of old Japanese wooden sweet molds (*kashigata*.) There are some great examples of auspicious imagery to be found in these authentic works of folk craft. Molds like these have been used for a few hundred years

in Japan, and some are still being used today. Visit our website, [www.mingei-wasabidou.com](http://www.mingei-wasabidou.com) and look at the listings under "wood" (or just search "kashigata") to see all of these items with full descriptions.

Sweet molds, "kashigata," have been a part of confectionary culture around the world. Well-known examples in Asia come from Japan, China, Korea, and Indonesia. In Europe; countries such as Germany, Holland, and England have a rich history of cake mold production. Materials such as wood, ceramic, glass, plastic, and numerous metals such as iron, copper, and tin have been employed to shape cakes, cookies, and



candy into objects of art and symbolism.

In Japan, kashigata history goes back over 300 years, and wood has been the primary material since then. Commonly used woods include yamazakura (mountain cherry,) katsura (Japanese Judas,) ichou (ginko,)

tsubaki (camellia,) and keyaki (zelkova.) Rarer examples may be made from kuri (chestnut,) kaki (persimmon,) and yanagi (willow.) An extremely wide variety of images was produced during the Edo (1600-1868) and the subsequent Meiji (1868-1912) Periods.



Auspicious symbols such as cranes, tortoises, pine (evergreen,) and shrimp or lobster (with rounded backs like the elderly) symbolized long life; while others such as plum and bamboo represented the qualities of perseverance (plum is the first tree to

blossom after the harsh winter) and resilience (after bamboo's resilient nature against the elements.) The Sea Bream fish, "tai," would have been used for any celebratory occasion due to the play on words "omedetai" (congratulations, felicitations.) Any of these could have been used for a wedding, birth, or New Year celebration. Other examples could be seasonal references; cherry blossoms in spring, chrysanthemums in winter, mushrooms in fall, peaches in summer (also symbolic of fertility.) In the late Meiji, Taisho (1912-1926,) and early Showa (1926-1989) periods; examples of Japanese imperialism also were portrayed in kashigata; including war slogans and military designs. In other cases, simple geometric patterns were utilized in kashigata. Throughout their history, Japanese kashigata have been produced in a tremendous range of imagery, symbolism, and design that has imbued the spirit of the carver and the mystery of natural and supernatural symbolism, into the artisanal tradition of handmade Japanese sweets.