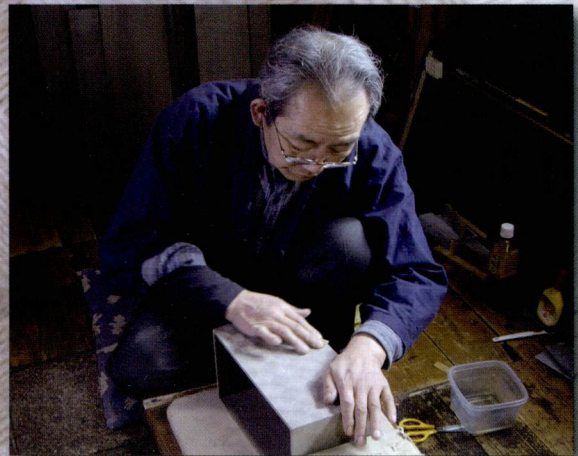
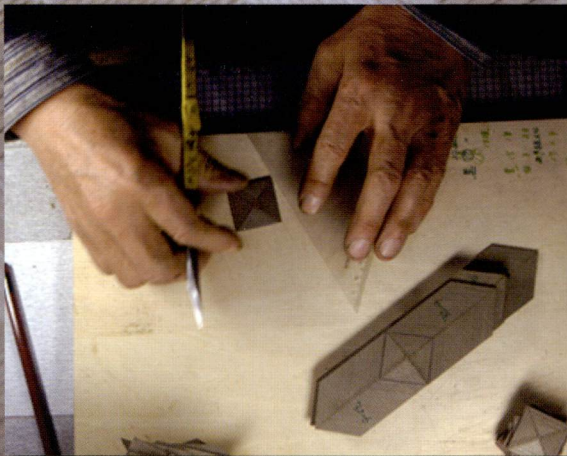


# Woodwork -The Techniques of Nakagawa Kiyotsugu-

2007 Documentary Film on Craft Technique 35mm, Color, 33 minutes  
Planning: Agency for Cultural Affairs / Production: Nikkei Visual Images, Inc.

Blessed with a natural abundance of tree species, Japan's wood craft quickly developed with the adaptation of techniques from the Asian continent around AD 500. Using materials only found in Japan, wood craft further developed a distinctive Japanese style, and with the advent of modernity, great woodworks have been created through the efforts of master artisans of wood joinery, carving, turning and bentwood work.

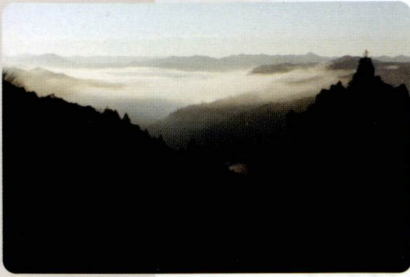
Recognized as an Important Intangible Cultural Property holder for woodwork, Nakagawa Kiyotsugu bases his techniques from traditional wood bucket joinery using soft wood such as cedar and cypress. His mastery of wood is demonstrated in his marquetry and *masa-awase* techniques that combine rectangular and triangular parts together. In this film, we capture the creative processes behind Nakagawa's elaborate marquetry techniques, in particular focusing on how the artist creates geometrical patterns using the natural grain found in *Jindai-Sugi* (ancient Japanese cedar wood).



## Nakagawa Kiyotsugu



- 1942 Born to a family of Kyoto traditional wood bucket craftsmen
- 1963 Apprentices to father Kameichi and learns basic techniques for crafting wood buckets
- 1972 Work selected in 19<sup>th</sup> Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition  
After participating in Kuroda Tatsuaki's study group, Nakagawa devises technique of *masa-awase* based on Kuroda's advice to remove the metal band and the base from the bucket. The technique was named by Kuroda.
- 1974 Apprentices to Takeuchi Hekigai and studies wood joining techniques  
Nakagawa discovers *Jindai-Sugi*, and strives to bring out the beauty of this ancient cedar wood
- 1975 Receives Prize of the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education at 22<sup>nd</sup> Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition
- 1983 Receives Prize of the Chairman of Japan Art Crafts Association at 30<sup>th</sup> Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition
- 2001 Recognized as Important Intangible Cultural Property holder for woodwork
- 2003 Receives Medal with Purple Ribbon



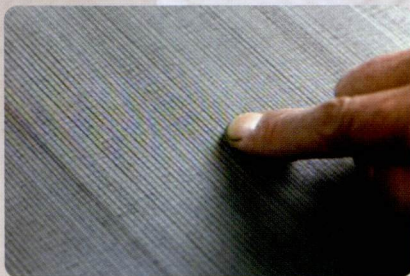
## ◆ Prologue - Japan, A Land of Forests -

Japan has developed a culture that values and appreciates its trees. The country's mild and humid climate has helped nurture its forests, and wood has been utilized in many aspects of daily life.



## ◆ A Shosoin Treasure - Marquetry Box -

With the Aged Wood Diamond-Shaped Marquetry Box, one of the Shosoin Treasures, one can discover exquisite decoration made with natural wood grain.



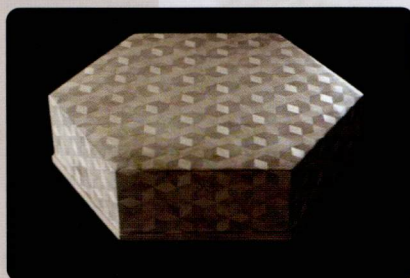
## ◆ Tree Rings and Wood Grain

Tree rings help to verify the age of a tree. By vertically cutting through these rings, different types of wood grain such as straight-grain and cross-grain are revealed. Straight-grain refers to the straight lines that are found when one cuts directly through a wood core.



## ◆ Woodwork Artist Nakagawa Kiyotsugu

Residing in Kyoto, the woodwork artist Nakagawa Kiyotsugu has created a unique technique that has brought a new aesthetic dimension to straight-grained wood. In 2001 the artist was recognized by the Japanese government as an Important Intangible Cultural Property holder, also known as a Living National Treasure, for his woodwork techniques.



## ◆ Jindai-Sugi Hexagonal Box with Marquetry

One of Nakagawa's seminal works is the *Jindai-Sugi* Hexagonal Box with Marquetry. In this work, the intricate wood grains of the ancient Japanese cedar are transformed into geometrical marquetry patterns. The marquetry patterns change with the slightest variations in light, and Nakagawa's skilled *masa-awase* technique is fully evidenced.



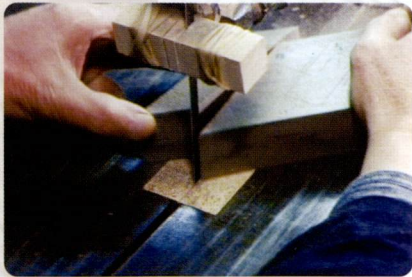
## ◆ From Creating Buckets to Masa-Awase

After training under his father, who was a traditional wood bucket craftsman in Kyoto, Nakagawa was influenced by the master wood artist Kuroda Tatsuaki. After receiving Kuroda's advice while participating in his study group, Nakagawa devised the technique of *masa-awase*. Nakagawa later acquired high-level skills in wood joinery through his training under Takeuchi Hekigai, who was known for his prowess with techniques using imported hardwood. Nakagawa extended his skills as an artist to develop an original aesthetic.



## ◆ Conceiving a New Work - Images of Kyoto -

For the motifs on his latest marquetry box, Nakagawa has been inspired by images of Kyoto, such as the stone paths of Gion and the mountain cedars of northern Kyoto. After creating a proportionate paper model of the box, Nakagawa checks its overall balance.



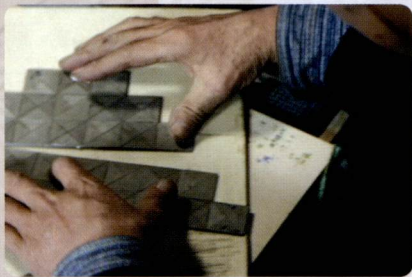
## ◆ Wood Demarcation and Cutting

To discern the number of similar straight-grained segments that can be taken from a single piece of wood, an acrylic plate is used to demarcate the wood. A band saw is used to cut the wood to a thickness of 3 mm, and 14 pieces (7 pairs) are made.



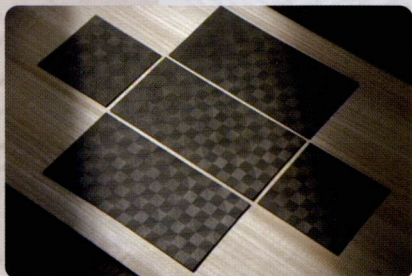
## ◆ Creating Marquetry Parts

The marquetry pattern for this particular box is *Ichimatsu* checkered marquetry. Individual pieces that bring out the full beauty of the straight-grain of *Jindai-Sugi* are formed.



## ◆ Creating and Attaching Parts

To perfectly align the linear patterns of the straight-grained pieces, utmost precision in regards to arranging and attaching each piece is needed. Nakagawa uses original methods such as mixing ordinary wood glue with pureed rice glue, together with tape as a temporary reinforcement.



## ◆ Completing a Board of Marquetry

By attaching nearly 1,200 different pieces together, Nakagawa creates a single board of marquetry with the *Ichimatsu* checkered patterns. After this is completed, a rough polish using a scouring rush is applied.

Nearly one month after its conception and planning, 5 marquetry boards including the top and side boards of the cover are finished.



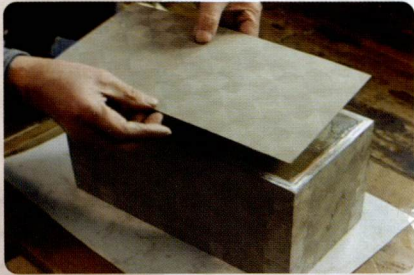
## ◆ The Birthplace of *Jindai-Sugi*

Mt. Chokai towers over the prefectural boundaries of Yamagata and Akita. The volcanic ash that erupted from the mountain buried a colossal cedar forest for 2,600 years. The wood from those cedars is called *Jindai-Sugi*. The enigmatic allure of this ancient cedar's distinct colors has captured the heart of Nakagawa.



## ◆ Assembling the Parts

After the marquetry and side boards are firmly attached through weights, grooves are formed in the conjoining edges of the boards. The four boards are assembled into a box-like shape, and are held together with long rectangular dowels. A 3-dimensional form is thus completed.

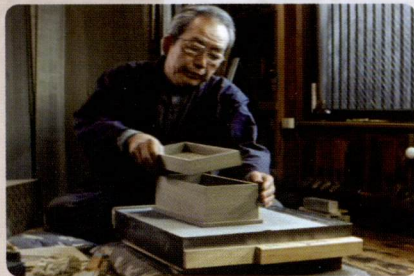


## ◆ Creating the Top Board

To prevent the wood from warping as it shrinks, the underside of the top board is scraped with a *yari-ganna*, and the top board is delicately shaved with a *sen* in order to create a gentle curvature.



| yari-ganna



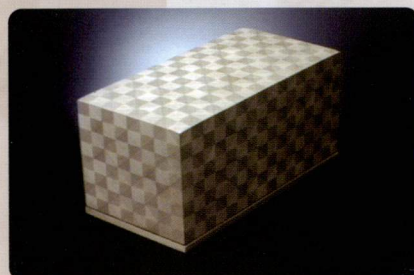
## ◆ Assembling the Body

After the *Jindai-Sugi* straight-grain boards are assembled, marquetry is inlaid into the base of the upper portion of the main body. A slight angle is created in the body so that the cover slowly sinks onto it.



## ◆ Final Polishing

The surface is first polished with rough sandpaper in order to remove impurities. Next, a fine sandpaper is wrapped around a bamboo stick, and this is used to polish and accentuate the checkered patterns. Lastly, the work is polished with a scouring rush, sharpening stone, and a natural wax called *ibota-ro*.



## ◆ Completion of New *Jindai-Sugi* Box with Marquetry

Nakagawa's 30 years of artistry are embodied in the latest *Jindai-Sugi* Box with Marquetry using ancient Japanese cedar.

Incorporating traditional techniques with leading innovation, Nakagawa's passion for creating new works will never falter.

**Special thanks to** Ishiyama-dera Kitain Temple The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto  
Office of the Shosoin Treasure House, Imperial Household Agency  
Ken Domon Museum of Photography Nara National Museum Watanabe Meiboku-Ten

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