



## Fine Japanese Art (JAP1221)

Fri, 3rd Dec 2021

### Lot 200

**Starting price:** €3000

**Estimate:** €6000

#### Ÿ ASAHI GYOKUZAN: A SUPERB IVORY OKIMONO OF A SKELETON ATOP A TOAD CARRYING A MONKEY

By Asahi Gyokuzan (1843-1923), signed Asahi Gyokuzan Japan, Tokyo, Meiji (1868-1912)

Finely carved and stained, the skeleton standing with one leg atop a giant separately carved toad with warty skin and large eyes with dark inlaid pupils, its skull cracked in several places and with cavernous eye sockets and a full set of teeth, suggesting a forced smile as it buckles under the weight of the rather fierce-looking monkey clambering on its back, wearing a shirt and fletching its teeth as it holds on to the rope around the skeleton's neck. The skeleton is holding a globular koro (incense burner) in one hand and a large furred lotus leaf hangs from its pelvis. The underside signed ASAHI GYOKUZAN.

HEIGHT 14 cm

Condition: Good condition with minor wear and old repairs.  
Provenance: Belgian private collection.

Born in Asakusa, Asahi Gyokuzan together with Ishikawa Komei (1852-1913) were designated Teishitsu gigeiin (Imperial Court Artist) and were two of the most famous and influential carvers in Japan during the Meiji Period (1868-1912). Gyokuzan first trained as a Buddhist priest in the late Edo Period, but as a young man he took to a more secular life as a carver. He soon became renowned for his unsettlingly realistic compositions of skulls and skeletons. He eventually achieved a higher distinction than that of his master, Takamura Koun (1852-1934), and his carvings earned him great admiration at the St Louis Exposition of 1904.