

Classifying Shapes and Materials of *Kiseru*

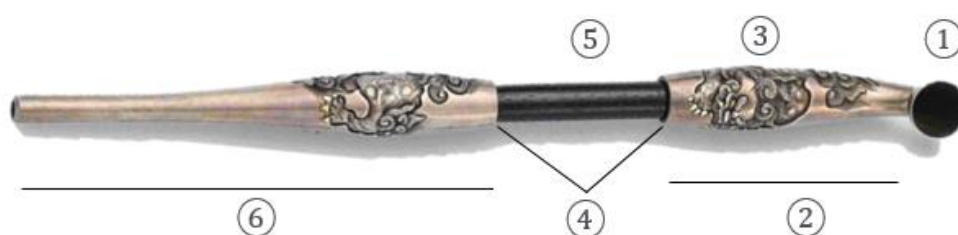
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Different Parts of a *Kiseru*

The Japanese pipe, *kiseru*, is a tool for smoking tobacco. In general, the *kiseru* consists of three basic parts: the pipe bowl, in which cut tobacco is placed and the pipe is lit; the stem, through which tobacco smoke is passed; and the mouthpiece, through which smoke is inhaled. There is no set form for *kiseru* to take, and as such they come in many different shapes and forms.

If we were to categorise *kiseru* into types, they fall in two broad categories: 1) the *rau-kiseru*, in which the bowl and mouthpiece are made of metal or similar material, and the stem (through which tobacco smoke passes) is made of bamboo, wood, etc.; and 2) the *nobe-kiseru*, in which the bowl, stem, and mouthpiece are all made of metal.

The body of a *kiseru* can be further classified into:



1. *Hizara* (bowl) – Where tobacco is placed
2. *Gankubi* (head) – Broadly defined, it refers to the entire head of the *kiseru*, including the bowl and the portion from the base of the bowl to where it connects to the stem (*rau*). Defined more narrowly, the head refers to this portion minus the bowl. This portion is called the *gankubi* (lit. “goose neck”) due to its

resemblance to the neck of a migratory wild goose.

3. *Kata* (“shoulder”) – Some early *kiseru* have a stem called a *kata*, somewhat wider than the main stem, into which the main stem (*rau*) is inserted.
4. *Koguchi* (lit. “small opening”) – The parts at which the head and mouthpiece connect to the stem (*rau*) on a *rau-kiseru*.
5. *Dou* (lit. “body”) – On a *rau-kiseru*, *dou* refers to the part between the bowl on the head and the *koguchi*, as well as the part between where the lips touch the mouthpiece and the *koguchi*. On a *nobe-kiseru*, *dou* refers to the central part between the bowl and the mouthpiece.
6. *Suikuchi* (mouthpiece) – Broadly defined, the mouthpiece refers to the entire tail part of a *kiseru*. Defined more narrowly, the mouthpiece is the part where the lips touch the mouthpiece.

Forms of *Kiseru*

Based on paintings showing customs and manners of the early modern period (c. 1568-1867) and other such pictorial resources, many *kiseru* of the early Edo period are long with large bowls, and the part immediately under the bowl curves heavily downward. The large bowl is thought to have been due to the rough way in which the tobacco was cut. Over time, the bowl became progressively smaller, and the curvature underneath the bowl also became smaller and shorter. This is likely due to the fact that as the custom of smoking tobacco spread and became more common, there was a larger demand for tobacco that is easier to light and smoke, prompting an improvement in techniques to cut tobacco leaves more finely. It is also possible that techniques to make *kiseru* became more advanced and they were made shorter and more portable.

Kiseru were made in a variety of shapes and forms depending on the status, occupation, or sex of the user, in addition to the changes based on the trends of each time period. Katsushika Hokusai’s (1760–1849) 1823 work *Imayo Sekkin Hinagata* (“*Modern Designs for Combs and Tobacco Pipes*”) portrays the forms and shapes of *kiseru* in the Edo period and their respective names. The accompanying text also

suggests that even at the time, there was already been a variety of *kiseru* designed “in accordance with the trends of the times.” It is, thus, extremely difficult to keep track of all the different *kiseru* shapes and forms.

Apart from the standard shapes and forms of *kiseru*, some are made with distinctive shapes, forms and unique materials.

1. *Natamame kiseru*

Named for its resemblance to the sword bean, a *natamame kiseru* is entirely flat and designed in a shape that could be easily carried around in the pocket. Some *natamame kiseru* feature engraved designs on their flat surfaces and some were ornamented with *kozuka* (a decorative handle fitting of a knife). This type of *kiseru* was often used by soldiers during the Meiji Restoration (1868).



Nobe-kiseru

Late Edo period (18th to 19th century)

Silver, *shakudo* and gold

Length 14cm

Collection of Liang Yi Museum (LYMP-104)

2. Kodaiji *kiseru*

This type of *kiseru* was used in the reception hall of Kodaiji Temple, an ancient temple in Kyoto. Its distinguishing features are its large, round mouthpiece and small bowl.



Rau-kiseru

Mid- to late Edo period (18th century)

Bamboo and silver

Length 32.5cm

Collection of Liang Yi Museum (LYMP-015)

3. *Tazuna kiseru* (lit. bridle pipe)

This *nobe-kiseru* created in the shape of a *shimenawa* straw festoon is called a *tazuna kiseru* due to its resemblance to the reins used to control a horse by its rider. This type of *kiseru* places an emphasis on its interesting shape over the ease of smoking. Large *tazuna kiseru* are used by actors in dramatic plays portraying characters such as Ishikawa Goemon.



Nobe-kiseru

Late Edo to Meiji period (18th to 19th century)

Copper

Length 12.5cm

Collection of Liang Yi Museum (LYMP130)

4. *Meoto-kiseru*

Literally meaning “couple’s pipe,” this type of *kiseru* features two mouthpieces emerging out of a single bowl so that two people can enjoy smoking at the same time.



Meoto-kiseru

Katura Mitsuharu

Meiji to Taishō period (19th to 20th century)

Silver, bronze and gilt

Length 19.5cm

Collection of Liang Yi Museum (LYMP-170)

5. *Kawari-gata kiseru*

Kiseru made in various shapes such as umbrellas, guns and trumpets.



Nata-shaped kiseru

Mutoyama

Meiji period (1868-1912)

Iron, silver and *shakudō*

Length 14cm

Collection of Liang Yi Museum (LYMP-164)

6. *Goshinyou kiseru*

A type of “self-defense pipe” made of iron to double as a weapon. This type of *kiseru* is thicker and longer than a standard iron *nobe-kiseru*. Some even feature bumps on the surface of the *kiseru* to make it even more lethal.



Nobe-kiseru

Late Edo period (18th to 19th century)

Iron, copper and gilt

Length 28.7cm

Collection of Liang Yi Museum (LYMP124)

7. *Giyaman kiseru*

Glass *kiseru* are highly valued in tea ceremonies.



A Set of Five *Giyaman-kiseru*

Meiji period (1868-1912)

Coloured glass

Length 20cm

Collection of Liang Yi Museum (LYMP-143 to 147)

8. Ceramic *kiseru*

A type of pottery *kiseru* famously produced in Seto-shi, Aichi Prefecture and Oribe, Gifu Prefecture. Ceramics *kiseru* did not become commonplace as the material is too delicate. During the late Edo period, a kind of ceramics *kiseru* called *kesho kiseru* (cosmetics pipe), which features white porcelain and dyed or lacquered designs on the stem, was made as a collectable for women rather than for actual use.



Kiseru

Meiji period (1868-1912)

Ceramic

Length 13.8cm

Collection of Liang Yi Museum (LYMP-102)

9. Bamboo *kiseru*

Kiseru made entirely with bamboo. The production of bamboo *kiseru* declined as metal *kiseru* began to be produced domestically. Prior to that, they were in popular use during the early Edo period.



Kiseru

Late Edo to Meiji period (19th to 20th century)

Wood and silver

Length 20cm

Collection of Liang Yi Museum (LYMP-129)

Kiseru Materials

Kiseru are made with a variety of materials, including metal, wood, stone, ceramics, and glass. Among this wealth of materials, metal remains the most common, being both easy to work with and highly durable. Metals used to produce *kiseru* include iron; copper; brass; *shakudo*; *shibuichi*; tin; silver; and gold, with copper and copper alloys being used most frequently. Many early *kiseru* were made of a single type of metal, but over time a combination of metals were used on one pipe due to both the advancement of *kiseru* production techniques, as well as the use of different hues of metals to make create more colourful *kiseru*.

Gilding, silver-plating, inlaying and other pattern-engraving work eventually shifted a *kiseru*'s original function as a tobacco-smoking tool to becoming an accessory. Many *kiseru* made of wood, stone, ceramics and glass were more of a recreational nature, and did not become mainstream items.

Bamboo is the most common material used to produce the stem of a *kiseru*, in addition to evergreen oak and other hardwood materials. A variety of bamboo were used: *hanchiku* (spotted bamboo); some dyed with polka-dot patterns in imitation of *hanchiku*; some were baked; some were coated with vermilion or black lacquer; and some were decorated with *maki-e* lacquer. Luxurious pipes employ wood such as ebony and rosewood. Some *kiseru* also include the materials of ivory and red lacquer.

Metal engraving

Metal engraving is a technique in which a chisel is used to engrave patterns or characters, punch openings, or inlay other metals on metal works that have been casted or forged. Methods of engraving include line engravings such as hairline engraving and *katagiri-bori* (simulated ink-brush painting), *sukidashi-bori* (plowed-out carving), high-relief engraving, *sukashi-bori* (openwork), inlaying, and *nanako* (patterns of small dots). The primary methods of metal engraving used for *kiseru* decoration are listed below.

1. *Kebori* (hairline engraving)

Also known as hairline engraving, it is a basic method of decorating metalworks using a V-shaped or U-shaped chisel.

2. *Tensen-bori* (dotted-line carving)

Technique in which a dotted-line pattern is created through repeated hammering by a chisel with a sharp point.

3. *Keribori* (sequences of fine dots)

Technique in which a rooftop-shaped chisel is used to create line engravings by “kicking” with one edge of the blade. The marks of *keribori* appears as wedge-shaped triangular dots, resulting in extremely precise lines.

4. *Katagiri-bori* (simulated ink-brush painting)

Literally meaning simulated ink-brush painting. It is an engraving technique characterised by the deep and shallow patterns created by tilting the tip of the chisel to one side. The technique is ideal to express the brushwork of the *tsuketate* style painting (a style of ink painting that avoids painting outlines).

5. *Sukidashi-bori* (plowed-out carving)

A technique of plowed-out carving in which the perimeter of a design is carved away to create depth.

6. *Takaniku-bori* and *Usuniku-bori* (High relief and bas-relief engraving)

Techniques in which a three-dimensional effect is achieved by lifting the design above the surface of the metal. “High relief” (*takaniku-bori*) refers to a method of carving away surrounding metal to bring the design to a relatively high point; whereas bas-relief (*usuniku-bori*) refers to a method of achieving a somewhat lower relief.

7. *Sukashi-bori* (openwork)

By removing a portion of the metal to create a design. There are two types of openwork that fall under this technique: *jisukashi*, in which the design is left but the surrounding ground plate cut out; and *monyosukashi*, in which the design itself is directly cut out of the ground plate.

8. Line inlays

Also called “thread inlays”, patterns of this technique are chiseled into a ground plate using line engraving, and then thin thread-like pieces of metal are set into those line grooves. This is the simplest form of inlaying.

9. Flat inlays

A technique that inlays flat sheets onto the body of the object. A section of the ground plate is removed with a chisel and the design is then set into the niche. The surfaces of the ground plate and the inlaid design are flush.

10. High mounted inlays

Refers to inlays in which the inlaid material is raised higher than the ground plate.

11. Texture inlays

Technique in which a sharp chisel is used to create vertical and horizontal notches that resembles a fine cloth texture on the surface of the ground metal (generally iron). Thin wires or plates of gold or silver are then hammered into these notches. This is the only method of creating shading and gradations in metal.

12. *Sunako* inlays

Technique in which fine grains are scattered over a design. Small holes are then carved onto the metal surface with a chisel and another metal is inlaid into those holes.

13. *Nanako* (patterns of small dots)

Technique in which a chisel with a fine circular point is used to create a pattern

that resembles scattered millet grains. When these patterns are created at a high density, they resemble fish roe. Such pattern is typically applied to ground plates.

14. *Iro-e*

Colouring technique in which thin gold or silver plates are brazed on to carved-out areas of the ground metal.