

# Menko Corner

## Menko Companies





*by Ryan Laughton*



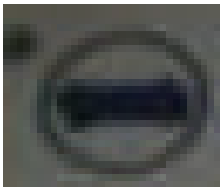

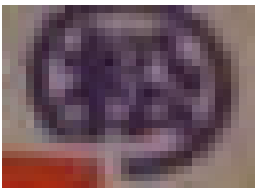



Recently one of my research quests is to try and learn more history and information about the different menko companies from the 1930s to 1960s. This has been a true challenge since this information is not readily available in Japanese let alone English and the only research medium I have at the moment is the internet. All in all, there are currently around 20 known manufacturers of

menko and cards from the 1930s to the 1970s and there are likely about 12 or so more out there that aren't identified.

The extremely limited information I have gathered so far is from the actual menko, taba packs and boxes the menko were packaged in. There is likely a lot more information on menko companies out there summarized in a toy or

antique book, but I have yet to come across one in my limited research to this point. The Japan Toy Culture Foundation is also an option and my plans are to try and gather more information or have them put me in touch with other Japanese collectors that have done research as well. Summarized below is a list of the known menko company marks and some production history for each.

	Asahi Gangu	Asahi printed one menko set each in 1954 and 1955. Asahi also produced a bunch of electric and tin toys in the mid-1950s which they are more famous for.
	Doyusha Gangu	Doyusha printed one set each in 1960 and 1961. They also printed a baseball set very similar to the 1961 sumo set. Not much else is known about this company.
	Hadaiya Gangu	I don't know the proper company name for this company mark so I called it the "8 Diamond", or Hadaiya, because of the diamond shape with the 8 in the middle although it looks more like the kanji for "Enter" or Iri.
	Hoshi Gangu	This set is interesting in that the Hoshi Gangu printed menko in the early 1940s and then you don't see this mark again on a menko until the early 1960s... 20 years later. It is unclear what they did during these 20 years.

	Kagome Gangu	The most famous of the menko companies. Kagome made numerous M and R series during the late 1940s and 1950s. Highly collectible and great quality.
	Maruo Gangu	Maruo made one sumo and baseball BC-series set in 1959, the BC592 set. Not much else is known about this company.
	Maruichi Gangu	Maruichi made several BC and BB-series sets in the late 1950s. Not much else is known about this company, but they played a minor role in the menko industry.
	Marukami Gangu	Marukami was a moderate player in the menko business in the late 1950s with several BC-series menko sets.
	Marumatsu Gangu	Marumatsu made one set in 1958 and this set is one of the easiest of all BC series menko to find. Although the company mark doesn't appear on the menko, it is seen on numerous prize sheets that exist today.
	Marusan Gangu	Marusan was a moderate player throughout the late 1950s although they had also made a set in the early 1940s right before World War II.
	Marusho Gangu	Marusho was another major player in the menko business in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In fact, Marusho stuck around until the very end of the menko era in 1964 and made one of the last menko sets ever produced.
	Maruta Gangu	Maruta was a major company in the menko business all throughout the 1950s. They produced numerous M and BC series menko. They also make numerous other non-sumo menko sets during this time.

	Maruko/Yagome Gangu	Only one known set was made by the Yagome Gangu company in the early 1940s.
	Mitsuwa Gangu	Mitsuwa made sets from 1956 to 1958 and was a moderate player in the menko business. They stuck to M and BC series menko.
	Nagoya Gangu	Nagoya Gangu dominated the menko industry in the early 1940s with close to a dozen sets. This was a very difficult time to print menko as the war effort made paper products expensive. One of the most unique features of the Nagoya sets is that the date of manufacture is also printed making set identification fairly easy.
	Niji Gangu	Niji printed a handful of M and R-series menko in the early 1950s, but was a very minor company. Niji Gangu menko are of lower quality than other sets.
	Nishin Company	Only one set is known to be made by the Nishin Company and that occurred in 1937. It is likely that many of the 1930s R-series menko were made by the Nishin Company, but that is unconfirmed.
	Sumo Kyokai (Osato Mini Cards)	Osato only made the 1975 Mini-Card set. They probably made numerous more non-sumo sets in the in 1970s as well.
	Yamakatsu Gangu	Yamakatsu was by far the most successful company to print menko and did so from the 1950s all the way up to the early 1980s with mini cards. Dozens of sets were printed by Yamakatsu and many more were probably printed by them, but are unidentified.