

# The Fate of Nagoya's Mechanical Festival Floats

By

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## I. FLOATS WITH "MECHANICAL" PUPPETS

The Tōkai region is a veritable treasurehouse of floats adorned with puppets known as *karakuri ningyō* 機巧人形. At present there exist close to two hundred such floats (*dashi* 山車) or festival cars. Expressions like "the *matsuri* has been beautifully decorated," or "they are pulling the *matsuri* by" are often heard about these floats. That the floats themselves are called "matsuri" leaves no doubt about their intimate connection with the festival (*matsuri* 祭り) in which they appear.

The tradition of the puppets we find on the floats today goes back to the days of the *Takeda karakuri shibai* 竹田からくり芝居, "Takeda's Puppet Theatre," in Osaka.<sup>1</sup> Some commoners from the Owari region witnessed the performances of the puppets there and decided that they would like to be able to enjoy such performances closer to home. So it came that the puppets were mounted on floats and used in the Tōkai area at festivals. About one hundred years after its first performance in 1662 (Kambun 寛文 2) Takeda's Puppet Theatre had lost its appeal and was dissolved. The puppets which had found their way into a Tōkai festival, however, even today continue to delight the eyes of spectators from their place atop the floats.

What kind of puppets are these *karakuri ningyō*? They are also called *shikake ningyō* 仕掛け人形 ("puppets with a device") or *kikai ningyō* 機械人形 ("puppets with mechanical works"). Structurally speaking there are two major types of devices, the *ito karakuri* 糸機巧 ("stringed device"), and the *hanare karakuri* 離れ機巧 ("independent device"). The stringed puppet moves when strings are pulled by

a person hidden from the viewer, and is distinguished by movements of a high degree of delicacy. Most of these puppets function as actors, to narrate a plot, but others, such as the *mojikaki* 文字書き (“writer”), are of interest primarily for their intricate movements. The other type, that of the *hanare karakuri* with an independent device, can be traced back to Takeda’s Puppet Theatre. They incorporate springs and cogwheels in their bodies and move as if they were completely independent from human hands. *Karako*, 唐子, (dolls in a costume that is thought to be Chinese) puppets of this type, display feats such as riding piggy-back on one another or swinging an iron bar around. There are such innumerable variations in their performances that even today their movements arouse considerable curiosity and astonishment among spectators.

From spring to fall one can watch these puppets at festivals throughout Tōkai area and admire their figures moving on top of their float to the accompaniment of the *hayashi* 囃子, a group of musicians. In this article I shall concentrate on one of the oldest surviving floats, that of Fukurokuju 福祿寿 at the Wakamiya Hachiman 若宮八幡 Shrine, which lies right in the heart of the area where these floats and their puppets are found.

II. THE FUKUROKUJU FLOAT AND THE WAKAMIYA HACHIMAN SHRINE  
*The Wakamiya festival* 若宮祭. The shrine of Wakamiya Hachiman was established in the reign of Emperor Mombu 文武 (697–707) at a place called Nagonoshō Imaichiba 那古野庄今市場. In 1610 (Keichō 慶長 15), when Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 built Nagoya castle, the shrine was moved to Suehiro-chō, the present Sakae-machi, and given the title of Nagoya Sōchinju 名古屋総鎮守, Main Tutelary Deity of Nagoya.

The Wakamiya festival is also called Gion festival. It flourished as one of Nagoya’s Three Great Festivals\* and dates back to the Kyōho 享保 era (early 18th century). That there were formerly seven neighborhood groups (*chōnai* 町内), each with its own magnificent float, can be gathered from a song by Ōe no Okyō 大江尾京:

Gion Festival is entertainment on the Black Ship,  
At Tamaya it is the Writer and the Mother of the Western Paradise  
Nakasuga has its Shakkyō  
At Ōkubomi, chinchiki, chinchiki, chinchikichinchiki beats the gong  
Ryūjin appears from the drum, and Tenjin blows the flute.<sup>2</sup>

\* The Wakamiya festival 若宮祭 at the Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine (May 15 and 16); the Tōshō festival 東照祭 at the Tōshō Shrine (April 17), which has no surviving float; and the Tennō festival 天王祭 at the Nagono Shrine (October 17 and 18), with three floats surviving.

Four floats, however, were lost in the conflagrations of war, and another fell into disuse after being sold by its former neighborhood groups. Among those which still exist today, one—the *kasui* 河水 float of Sumiyoshi-chō, which is still in action—has been sold to the inhabitants of Deki-machi in the Higashi Ward. The other of the two survivors is the Fukurokuju float of Ōkubomi-chō (present Sakae 2, 3 chōme). The Fukurokuju float at the Wakamiya Hachiman is the only one that has survived in its original area. It is still maintained by the parishioners (*ujiko* 氏子) of the eight neighborhood groups in a yearly rotation system. Each year it is pulled out for the shrine's festival on May 15 and 16, and also for the Nagoya Festival in October.

*The puppets of the Fukurokuju float.* The Fukurokuju float was built in 1676 (Empō 延宝 4), and a man of Sumiyoshi-chō, a *yamabushi* 山伏 with the name Tamon'in 多聞院 made its four puppets, i.e. Fukurokuju, the two Chinese boys (*karako* 唐子) and the "fore-puppet," or *mae-ningyō* 前人形, that waves a *gohei* 御幣, or sacred staff with cut paper strips (Fig. 3). At that time, one of the two Chinese boys beat a drum. But in 1767 (Meiwa 明和 4) Takeda Jusaburō 竹田寿三郎, a craftsman from Ōsaka, remade the puppets into independent dolls in such a way that one of them beats a fan-shaped drum (Fig. 6) and the other stands upside-down, its left hand fixed onto a lotus shaped stand and its right hand beating a gong, while its head waves left and right (Fig. 4).

The basic placement of the puppets on the Fukurokuju float is similar to that of other independently moved puppets, who perform piggy-back or do the Big Wheel. There is first the main Chinese boy, who performs a feat to catch the eyes of the spectators, and then the supporting boy, who aids the main actor by demonstrating great joy as soon as the other's feat has reached its climax. Then behind these two there is the puppet of the General, or in the case of the Fukurokuju float the puppet of Fukurokuju, who watches them carefully, and praises their success. Finally, in front of them there is the puppet waving a staff to which paper strips have been tied (Fig. 1).

Here I would like to say a few words about each of the puppets.

First we have the puppet waving the staff with paper strips (Fig. 2), who stands at the foremost point of the car. When the car is pulled forward the puppet moves, purifying the road. This puppet is of special interest because its face is modelled after the face of the men who sold salt in the streets of the town. It is quite an unusual doll. Its face burnt black by the salt, the doll wears a *suhō* 素袍, a garment that is used in Noh plays, and as headgear an *eboshi* 烏帽子 formerly used by aristocrats. It looks like a Shintō priest carrying a staff with white

paper strips, meaning that it prays for the purification of the six roots of perception (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind, see Monsui 1910) and for evil to be driven away. Furthermore, the relation between the image of the salt seller and the purifying function of salt itself cannot be overlooked here. This *gohei*-swinging puppet swings the staff to the right and to the left by having its body moved on its axis. There have been times when this humorous puppet version of the salt seller was out of favor with the feudal lord and was made to wear the *tafuku* 多福 mask (the smiling mask of a fat woman). But in whatever form it has always been the favorite of the people.

Next there is the puppet with the leading part, the Chinese boy who does handstands (Fig. 4). As to the method by which the puppet is operated, there is a scene before the puppet performs his handstand in which the puppet plays with the second Chinese boy. At this instance the puppet is moved by a string that comes from between his legs. When it is about to stand on its hand, its left hand touches the lotus pedestal; at this point the metal fitting of the fingertips, interlocks with that of the pedestal and thus fixes the puppet's position. As soon as this happens, the control rod that transmitted the movements is quickly pulled out from under the crotch and reset into the arm from under the lotus pedestal.<sup>3</sup> When the hook of this rod catches the metal fitting of the arm, the strings begin to function. If the timing of the interchange is less than perfect, the puppet will fail to stand on its hand (Fig. 5). It is indeed a very difficult technique to manipulate the rod. That is why to perform such feats with a puppet needs much practice and expertise. One must first repeat the movement dozens of times in order to memorize how the strings run. Even so, once this Chinese Boy has succeeded standing on its hand and begins to move its head right and left, beating a gong with its other hand, it is without question a most charming sight. And even if it has difficulties in its handstand and its feet move up and down without finding their position, it is still quite cute.

Next there is the Chinese boy with the supporting part (Fig. 6). Its movements were once simplified, but after a repair in the fall of 1982, it was restored to its original form. It thus first beats a fan-shaped drum in front of it, then it bends its body ingeniously and beats the drum from behind its back. At the same time it moves to the left and to the right.

Finally, slightly backstage, there is the symbol of long life, the puppet of Fukurokuju. When the Chinese boy succeeds in his handstand, Fukurokuju waves his round fan gently and nods his head. The head of the puppet that is used now has no moving facial parts, but

there are old heads, still preserved today, with *kaeri-me* 返り目 or eyeballs that would move to produce a surprised look, and others which show signs that their tongue could be made to stick out (Fig. 8).

*The floats.* The Fukurokuju float is built as a two storey Chinese structure with four wheels attached to it from the outside. The lower floor accomodates the musicians, and the upper floor the puppeteers; on top of this we find the mechanical stage. This is in fact the typical form of such a float.

The floor space of the upper floor is generally about the size of two *tatami* mats or approximately 3 m<sup>2</sup>. Altogether seven persons are squeezed into this narrow space. The fore-puppet is not used during the performance of these puppets. It is used only before the performance starts or when the float moves. The seven people are the operators of the puppets—three for each of the two Chinese boys, and one for Fukurokuju. Operations in the cramped room are always prone to erupt in quarrels.

The musicians on the lower floor include performers on four Noh flutes, one big drum, two set drums (*tsuke daiko* つけ太鼓), and four hand-drums or small hand-drums. There is a total of eleven musicians. Here again it is a narrow place, especially since so many adults with their instruments have to find suitable operating space. Where people unconsciously create a certain distance between themselves and others in daily life, we can readily assume that this narrowness of space on the *matsuri* creates its very special feeling.

One of the special features of floats in Nagoya is the fact that their ceilings—which is to say, the stage for the puppets—can freely be lowered or lifted. This device dates back to feudal times when the lord of the Han 藩 used to watch the performances. In those times it was necessary to pass under the low ceiling of the castle gate, but even today, when the floats must pass under electric lines or trafic lights, this gear is of great advantage. Thanks to this device, the floats were spared the lamentable experience of having their shape cut down, and they can thus be pulled today as they were before.

The Fukurokuju float is also called the South Pole Star Float, a name that has to do with the origin of Fukurokuju.<sup>4</sup> All four sides of the float immediately under the railing of the puppets' stage are brilliantly decorated with constellations of stars, inlaid with coral, and crystal, although some of the stones are now missing. The *mizuhiki maku* 水引幕, an embroidered curtain covering the upper compartment, is also very beautiful. Cranes embroidered on this curtain were modelled on a design by Matsuno Baisan 松野梅山, a painter of the famous

Kano School. For the eyes of the cranes agate, coral, amber and jade were used. There can be no doubt that this sort of gorgeousness must have taken the eyes of the early spectators by surprise.

So the Fukurokuju float is not only the oldest, in terms of years, it is also a float rich in tradition and valuable as a work of art and craftsmanship. It is in every respect the model of a mechanical float.

Only one single float has survived in Nagoya's Sakae-machi. This area today is the cultural and industrial heart of the entire Tōkai region and at the same time the center of the area where such floats are found. Against this background I would like to give some thought to the kind of people connected with the Fukurokuju float and to how the tradition itself is being preserved.

### III. GROUPS CENTERING AROUND THE FUKUROKUJU FLOAT

Floats—including the Fukurokuju float of Ōkubomi-chō—originally belonged to particular neighborhood groups and the people living in that area maintained them and pulled them through the streets of their neighborhood at the time of the *matsuri*. On the one hand this was a duty virtually forced on the people, but on the other hand it was also linked to pleasure and was a source of their pride.

Yet, with the passing of time such consciousness on the part of the people grew more and more weak, thus making the preservation of the floats increasingly difficult. So it happened in 1945 that the Fukurokuju float was finally sold to another area, Deki-machi. With this the first period in the history of Ōkubomi-chō's Fukurokuju float came to an end.

The second period started in 1951, when the Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine bought the Fukurokuju float back. Through this action ownership of the float was transferred to the Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine itself, and the float that once has been the possession of a group of people became one of the shrine treasures. As a consequence of this acquisition, the only surviving float was now maintained in yearly turns by a group of *ujiko*, or parishioners of each of the eight neighborhoods that belong to the shrine. The fact that the float had been temporarily sold to the outside led then to a new start, where now the eight neighborhoods combined to maintain a single float on an equal standing, instead of owning one float each and competing with the other neighborhoods.

There is, however, an aspect to this affair that needs special consideration. Although it might be said that a formal system of yearly turns among the parishioners of the eight neighborhoods was instituted, it is by no means the case that this system was entrusted to the same neighborhoods that formerly had owned their own floats. During the

time between the selling and the reacquisition of the float the old divisions of the area and their affiliations were changed, and the names of *machi*, or neighborhoods, were also altered. The *ujiko* groups of old and those of the present are no longer the same.

Among the present eight neighborhoods four—Teppōchō, Monzenchō, Suehiro-chō and Sumiyoshi-chō—had formerly owned their floats. And as a matter of fact they remain the most fervant supporters of the floats. But what about the other four—Uramonzen-chō, Yaba-chō, Ōtsu-machi and Ikedakawara-machi—which previously did not own floats? As a consequence of their lack of a traditional base and their lack of the necessary expertise, the weight put on them by the new task was especially great. And yet, exactly because they had lacked all this, they were all the more firmly determined to make the best of it. Quite contrary to what might have been expected, their willingness to participate in the activities centered on the float was great.

But in former times as well there had been neighborhoods which owned floats and others which did not. Moreover, within any given neighborhood there were certain persons who were permitted to ride the floats and others who were not, depending on whether or not they owned their house. This is different today, for anybody who wishes to do so may get onto a float, be he old or young, man or woman, property owner or not. Everybody has come to have equal rights. These obligations of each subsequent generation to take over the float from its predecessor have disappeared hand in hand with the float becoming a shrine treasure. Furthermore, within the rotating system among the eight neighborhoods, one's turn comes around only once in eight years. No wonder then that feelings which were high at the moment of the *matsuri* cool down until the next turn comes. It is natural that the changes and fluctuations occurring in the neighborhood group that should be the basis of support for the festival produce groupings that are not, strictly, based on the neighborhood, and which then become involved with the floats.

Let us consider the case of the Fukurokuju float that is now owned by the Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine. The advantage of this float having become a shrine treasure lies in the manner the costs for maintenance are borne. The costs for the festival, the *Wakamiya matsuri*, amount to something between 1.5 million and 1.8 million yen.<sup>5</sup> About 20% of this is needed to cover the costs of the *karakidachi* 空木立, or the assembling of the float, and the handouts for the helmsmen. These costs are shouldered by the Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine. The remaining 80% are born by the neighborhood group in form of providing for uniform *yukata* for the participants and for food and drinks. In addition

to that, the Fukurokuju float is a " Designated Cultural Asset " of the City of Nagoya. Should, therefore, the float be in need of repairs, it is possible to receive financial assistance from the city.

If the costs were borne by each neighborhood a number of problems would be expected to arise. Because the feeling on the part of the inhabitants of each neighborhood that the float is theirs has already been weakened, and also because the number of inhabitants varies from neighborhood to neighborhood. Yet, on the other hand, if each community were to contribute its share to the maintenance costs, this would enhance their consciousness regarding the float.

Whatever the case may be, the fact that the float is now the treasure of Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine and a Designated Cultural Asset of Nagoya City is first of all an honor, and second a great advantage in terms of maintenance costs. Furthermore, it also helps to alleviate one of the difficult points in the management of the festival, entrusted to each of the eight communities by rotation.

Were we to assume that the continuation of the matsuri is guaranteed by this, we would be mistaken. At present, each community barely succeeds in mustering the necessary musicians only with the utmost effort. And yet, this alone is not enough to produce a matsuri with such floats. This is where the *Wakamiya dashi hozonkai* 若宮山車保存会, or the Wakamiya Association for the Preservation of the Float, emerges. This association, created in 1963, is in fact the group that is mainly responsible for the continued existence of the Fukurokuju float. This group shoulders the responsibility of providing puppeteers, helmsmen, and, of course, musicians. Indeed, it is the Association for the Preservation of the Float that maintains the float through the year. In spite of its name, the " yearly rotating system " of the neighborhoods covers only the Wakamiya matsuri of May 15 and 16. Annual events such as the ritual and formal performances at the shrine at New Year and the Wakamiya matsuri, and participation in the Nagoya Festival are taken care of completely by the Association.

And yet, after all this is secured the float still will not move. For this to happen, people are needed to pull it. Young people who are not parishioners but have gotten to know about the matsuri from relatives or friends are asked to help, as are students, who want to take advantage of the occasion to earn themselves some pocket money.

It has thus come about that the floats which first received their life through the hands of the people living in one neighborhood are now supported by an array of groups such as the Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine, Nagoya City, the parishioners of several neighborhood groups, the Association for the Preservation of the Float, and even people other



than the parishioners, or in other words by the complex cooperation of numerous and disparate people. Each of these individual groups is necessary for the continued preservation of the Fukurokuju float.

#### IV. PUPPETEERS, MUSICIANS, AND HELMSMEN

Fortunately, in the past few years the *karakuri-ningyō* have again begun to enjoy the attention of the public. Here and there exhibitions have been organized and books have been published. But these puppets have no life of their own. They need the concentrated efforts of human beings in order to come to life. As I said earlier, their ancestor, so to speak (Takeda's Puppet Theatre), has disappeared; the puppets that found their way into the matsuri, however, are still alive, but now as a part of the floats.

Three elements constitute the "mechanical" float. These are the puppeteers, the musicians and the helmsmen. The three form a single unit by bringing their forces together and balancing them against each other. Only when a perfect harmony has been achieved will a matsuri in the true sense emerge.

In former times, it is said, as soon as the music to which the puppets moved (the *ningyō-bayashi*) has come to an end, the big drum was struck and the fore-puppet began swininging his staff with white paper strips, with the shouts of the helmsmen the float was pulled out on its way. At this moment another turn of the hayashi was intoned, and people would say "the start was good," or "the drum was fine," and so evaluate the start. By all accounts the crucial element was the exact coordination of the three elements.

This kind of timing was possible precisely because each neighborhood still kept its own float and was thus thoroughly acquainted with the smallest detail of its operation. Nowadays, when solidarity in the community is becoming weaker and weaker and one has to rely on the cooperation of disparate groups and people, it is asking a good deal that the three elements themselves will be present at all. To forge them further into one unit is a most difficult job. In what follows I want to show in what ways or degrees people are involved with the roles of puppeteers, musicians and helmsmen.

*The puppeteers (ningyō-kata 人形方)*. Once the puppets were the symbol of the community and their manipulation was a secret carefully guarded during the matsuri. The transmission of this knowledge was limited; only the first son of a houseowner could be initiated into the art.

Today the puppets and whatever goes with them from their creation to their repair and manipulation are entrusted to the hands of a single

member of the Association for the Preservation of the Float, a person who is not even a parishioner of the shrine. This is Kiyokawa Yoshio, and his predecessor was also not an *ujiko*. Kiyokawa, a master carpenter, succeeded him as puppeteer because of a personal relationship he had with the man, and became the master puppeteer. He is also the one who in 1978 corrected or recreated the puppet that stands on its hand. At that time Kiyokawa put strings over the some thirty wheels in the body of the puppet, following his own method, and thus enabled the puppet to make a handstand and beat a gong. With his manifold talents this man is of utmost importance to the Fukurokuju float.

In 1980 a relative of one of the helmsmen presented himself to Kiyokawa as a hopeful puppeteer. For Kiyokawa this meant the appearance of a promising successor, but of course there is still a lack of personnel among the puppeteers. If everything were complete, there should be three persons for each Chinese boy and another for Fukurokuju making a total of seven. No wonder that Kiyokawa murmurs, "If I only had sons."

Thus the job of the puppeteer is currently entrusted completely to the Association for the Preservation of the Float. Things have progressed to the point that it is technically impossible to find puppeteers from the people of each community.

*The musicians (hayashi-kata 囃子方)*. In principle each neighborhood is responsible for forming its own group of musicians. Should it be impossible to gather the necessary number, then the Association for the Preservation of the Float would extend a helping hand. It is possible to gather musicians from neighborhoods that formerly had their own float. Monzen-chō, where there is an Association of Music Enthusiasts, is an example. Since the role of the musicians can still be taken care of, as before, by members of the community, and since the music plays a central role in the monthly gatherings of the Preservation Association, the musicians are the least problematic of the three constituting elements of the float.

As with the puppeteers, here too each neighborhood had its secrets in regard to the manner the music was to be played, and these were transmitted by word of mouth. Nowadays a written score has been produced as new means of preservation. Furthermore, there is also a growing tendency to gather not only *ujiko* but any music enthusiast as musicians, without asking questions about their affiliations to a particular neighborhood.

*The helmsmen (kaji-kata 梶方)*. In the district of the Wakamiya Hachi-

man Shrine live many merchants who have for generations owned their house and a plot of land belonging to it. As I noted above, one of the conditions for being allowed to board a float has been that the person owns his house. The masters of its district being quite prosperous, Wakamiya was able to build a magnificent float. But even in olden times people from outside the community performed the role of helmsmen, a part that required much physical strength. These people were carpenters who worked in the district, porters, messengers, and laborers. As a sign of gratitude for the favors they enjoyed during the year they would pull the float and their masters would treat them in return with *sake* and other delicacies. A relationship of mutual dependency existed between the two groups. There was hardly any difference between neighborhood groups in the method of pulling the floats, but due to the personal convictions of supervisors or the heads of the helmsmen, there were some characteristic movements when changing directions or at the *donten*, the full turning of the car around its own axis. In such moments the floats would compete with each other in technique and spectators would flock together to enjoy the scene. There were even matsuri buffs who would inspect and comment on the wheelmarks left at the *mageba* 曲げ場, the place where the float had effected a change of directions or made a *donten*.

Today, this kind of mutual dependency has crumbled and the matsuri is performed with all the participants on an equal standing—any participant will fill any role as the need demands. But just as in the case of the puppeteers, it has become impossible for each neighborhood to appoint its own supervisor and head of helmsmen. Instead, two gentlemen of the Association for the Preservation of the Float have been charged with this responsibility. For the rest, students and relatives of *ujiko* are hired to move the floats.

This of course leads to all sorts of people becoming associated with positions like puppeteer, musician or helmsman, which again leads to a geographical expansion of the area that is involved in some way with the matsuri, while at the same time bringing a weakening of the spiritual relationships among the participants themselves. This in turn has a strong negative influence on the integration that is necessary among the three groups of actors. Today, people gather one by one on the very day of the matsuri and the float starts to move. There is never any previous consultation among the three groups.

As things are now there is no longer any question that the people who stage the matsuri will also on ordinary days live in the same neighborhood and help each other in daily chores. Instead, the people who gather to keep the festival going have different motives and come from

disparate areas; only if this happens it is possible to start with the matsuri at all. Under such circumstances it can be expected that the three groups will have grown increasingly independent from one another.

#### V. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPPETS, MUSIC AND FLOAT

We have already seen that the three groups—puppeteers, musicians and helmsmen—are each constituted in a different way as far as the number of participants and their places of origin (e.g. *ujiko*, other, Association) are concerned. This is also apparent in the way each of these groups carries itself. In addition to the important contributions of these people, however, the character of the puppets, the music and the floats themselves also have an important bearing on the outcome of the whole.

Those who enact a matsuri do so in the midst of the flow of time. If they were to honor the past more than their actual situation demands, it would be difficult to carry on at all. On the other hand, it is ideal to be faithful to past forms. Keeping this dynamic relationship in mind, then, I shall consider the development that the three groups have experienced through time as well as the background of this development.

*The puppets.* The puppets are the symbol of both the float and the community. Their beauty and the enchantment and strangeness of their movements attract adults as well as children. Of all the elements of the matsuri they are the one that stands out and strikes the eye most. All of this is a great initial advantage. And yet it is even more fortunate that there is an ardent man like Kiyokawa who dedicates his time and takes care of everything from making the puppets to manipulating them. According to the chairman there was a time when the Fukurokuju float was sold and had stopped functioning as integral part of any festival. Therefore the puppets were not used and the former method of applying the strings was forgotten.

The present method of laying out the strings in the puppet's body is thus different from the one formerly used, and consequently the method of manipulating the puppets is also different. Although there are no concrete traces left, there must have been certain standards or a traditional method according to which the puppets were manipulated.

As far as the musicians are concerned, they got together after the war and wrote up a score of the music from memory. It is difficult to say whether this score is correct, i.e. whether it is an exact transcript of the original music, but there certainly must have been some common understanding regulating the harmony between the beat of the music and the movements of the puppets. Presently, Kiyokawa manipulates

the puppets to the musical accompaniment. He had no real method handed down to follow in this respect. Since he puts much weight on the puppeteer's understanding of the music, he takes part in the regular meetings of the Preservation Association, where he beats the hand drum. And he tells his successor, "If you want to operate the puppets, you first have to learn the music." This philosophy has led to a technique in manipulating the puppets that meshes perfectly with the music. Here, under the hands of Kiyokawa, the mutual understanding between the puppeteer's movements and the musicians' accompaniment is being created anew.

*The music.*<sup>6</sup> The difference between the music of Wakamiya and that of elsewhere lies in the type of flutes used. Elsewhere flutes of *shino* bamboo or of bamboo grass (*sasa*) are used, but Wakamiya uses Noh flutes, which require a bigger breathing capacity and are more difficult in technique. These Noh flutes carry the main tune, while the big drum beats the time.

Formerly one learned the music by watching the hands of a musician. Later, each hole of the flute was given a number and the number written down on a score. This is in fact one of the new preservation methods Wakamiya takes pride in. Prior to the development of this technique, I was told that they had been unable to produce a score at Deki-machi. The fact that Wakamiya succeeded in producing a score underlines its more progressive attitude.

The Preservation Association meets once a month for a practice session on the music. As instructor they invite the *iemoto* 家元, or the head master, of the Fukui School.<sup>7</sup> This gentleman is an *ujiko* of Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine and at the same time also a childhood friend of the Association's members, two conditions that make him an ideal instructor for the musicians, since he is acquainted with the traditions of the locality. The musicians thus make use of new methods of preservation, such as written scores, while at the same time carrying on most effectively in the old traditions, by operating as a group paying close attention to its local bonds.

*The float.* The last element to be considered is the float, the container, so to speak, of the puppets and the music. Although it keeps its outward traditional form, the float, too, has undergone some changes. In order to lift or lower its roof a big wheel had been installed in the lower floor, and five or six men had to pull a thick rope to operate this device. Now, a wormgear is used in one of the corners of the upper floor; this is an improvement that can be handled by one single person. The

improvement reduced that number of people on the float, but at the same time it has increased the work load of the remaining members. And as a further consequence the natural smoothness in the roof's movements has disappeared.

Or there is the case of *karakidachi* 空木立, the ceremony before the matsuri, where only the helmsmen gather to put the float together. Any day could formerly be chosen for this ceremony and decided on by the helmsmen and the officials, but now it must be done on Sunday to make sure that the members do not have to work. The *yamaoroshi* 山御し, or dismantling of the float, takes now place immediately after the matsuri has ended, the same night. It is a rather superficial affair, since only the four poles that make the helms of the float are removed. Done correctly, it would be necessary to dismantle the whole structure the next day in order to assess the damages, but nowadays this is out of question. Therefore a permanent shed was built where the float can be kept intact, a method that is also used elsewhere.

Considering the relative position of the puppets, the music, and the float within the ongoing flow of time, we might state the following:

The puppets: the question is not only manipulating them here and now.

An effort has been made to return to the old forms and their special flavor.

The music: it has succeeded somehow in both going with the flow of time and in preserving its traditional form.

The float: changed its form within the flow of time, due to new necessities.

Thirty years have passed since the once extinct matsuri was brought back to life. It is therefore time to reconsider its meaning. There are those who think the matsuri should take a form more compatible with the present age, which is a time characterized by innumerable kinds of easy amusements, while others want to give up the idea of the matsuri all together. These are difficult times, indeed.

The float, as well as the puppets, are oriented towards the past, but within the changes that involve everybody in the flow of time, it is impossible to re-live the past as it once was. It has to be transmitted in the midst of the flowing time. With a fervent man like Kiyokawa as their head, the small number of puppeteers endeavors to guard the traditions of the past, and is able to penetrate deeper into the past. On the other hand, the group of helmsmen is in need of large numbers of people, and has therefore experienced the influence of changes much more intensively.

To move the float it is enough that the supervisor takes command. The rest is a question of force. Continued practice, such as is necessary

for the puppeteers and musicians, is not asked for, and is even impossible. It is enough to muster sufficient force for the day. But since there is not enough interest anymore, a large number of people must be hired. Therefore, in order to cut down on both the numbers of people involved and the time spent, the float has been increasingly improved and the time necessary for its assembly thus shortened.

One reason for the difficulty in gathering people as helmsmen is probably the hidden or subdued character of this supporting job. A puppeteer must learn a difficult technique, but when he succeeds he is the attraction of the matsuri and the center of attention. The eyes of anyone seeing a float for the first time immediately are attracted by the puppets. Rare indeed is the person who is first attracted by the manner a float turns. One must be an expert to appreciate pulling techniques. However, to turn around or to change directions is most difficult, and the ability of the helmsmen is put to a severe test when it comes to turning in the narrow streets. This is the most dynamic and most valiant part of an otherwise passive festival. Therefore, the importance of the helmsmen is not to be overlooked.

How, then, does it come that the music has enjoyed a certain success, although it still preserves its ancient form? This is no doubt due to the fact that there are still many people who like it. But why are there enough of them? Would it be possible without the great fascination exerted by the instruments? There are many people who like to play any given instrument. And to play it in concert with others is even more enjoyable. Just as the puppets make people watch, the music makes them listen, and puts the musician at the center of this kind of attention. But it seems to me that the possibility of the musician enjoying oneself with music is also an important aspect of its attraction.

Because the *hayashi* 囃子, or the music, cannot be transposed and played on modern instruments, one may assume that there is no chance for change in this realm. But on the contrary, however, the easiest form of modernization is possible here: one can make a recording. In fact, I have seen floats that used taped music. It dampens one's pleasure, but it might well be the last resource to preserve the music at all. This has not yet happened with the Fukurokuju float.

Looking at the puppets, music, and float from this angle, we notice that each element is moving independently in its own direction and that there is a danger that the functioning of the mechanical float may fall apart for lack of necessary cooperation among its constituting elements. This, then, is the time to take up the question of the Association for the Preservation of the Float in more detail.

## VI. ASSOCIATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE FLOAT

Every third Friday of the month after eight o'clock in the evening one may hear the sound of matsuri music coming from the Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine. The Wakamiya Association for the Preservation of the Float is having its regular meeting. Originally, the meeting was set to start at six o'clock, but so-called "Nagoya time" kept piling up, and now it is practically impossible to start practicing until after eight o'clock. After everybody has finished work the members arrive alone or in twos, carrying a flute or a hand-drum. After some conversation, the practice starts.

The Wakamiya Association for the Preservation of the Float includes eighteen matsuri lovers. When the Association was founded in 1962 it had twenty-seven members. Now, twenty years later, the number has dwindled, but those who remain are true matsuri enthusiasts. The impression I received when attending a meeting of the Association was that the atmosphere at the Association was very like that at the neighborhood group itself. In spite of the fact that puppeteers and helmsmen have come together from outside the neighborhood, they harmonize quite well. I think this is because they form a group bound together by a spiritual bond, a deep-rooted love for the matsuri that each of them carries in his heart. This might replace the common feeling of belonging to the same neighborhood group.

As I mentioned earlier, the Fukurokuju float is cared for by an annual rotation system, but it is the Association for the Preservation of the Float that in fact looks after and maintains the float during the year. The Association is the ground, where friends with the same interests, musicians, puppeteers, and helmsmen, can meet, and where the integration of the matsuri itself can take place. Kiyokawa, the puppeteer, has his puppets dance to the music at the Association and he says that this is the easiest. It seems therefore that for the time being the danger of the float being completely dismantled has been overcome.

Yet, as the chairman points out, the three groups are still separate from each other within the Association. They come together but each has its special preference at heart; one likes the music, the other the puppets and the third the float. They have not yet grasped the matsuri as a whole. The monthly meetings are primarily practice sessions for the music. A proposal was made recently to have the puppets practice with the music. Questions of whether or not to bring in the puppets aside, if the puppeteer does not have the music in his head beforehand he will not be able to move the puppets smoothly with the music. The case of the helmsmen, who need to know the exact moment in order to



pull out the float with skill, is similar. As a matter of fact, it would be most desirable if all three groups attended the regular meeting together.

The ultimate goal of the Association for the Preservation of the Float, and here I repeat myself, is to stage a matsuri in which puppets, music, and movements of the float are perfectly integrated and in tune with each others. At the same time the Association is engaged in having each part grasp better its own role. Therefore, the Association is not blocked by a sole interest in the old forms, but is instead trying to introduce new methods of preservation that will suit the present, and it bases its activities on progressive and modern ideas. There is for instance no limit as to prospective members; in order to gather enthusiasts wherever they may be found the Association takes a very open stance. And yet, the outlook is not good. Two or three years ago a woman asked to be allowed to participate as a musician, after the Association had declared it would welcome women, who until then were tabooed from participation in the matsuri. The woman was gladly accepted, but since only men gathered for the practices, this only woman gradually lost interest, and at present it is again a men-only-affair. They also had gathered children to train as successors, but their number was small. Further, the communities' eagerness for education is high, and the children stopped coming once they had reached Junior High School age. Presently there is one Grade School boy who eagerly attends and beats the hand-drum. He is a big hope.

The role of oral transmission has become weak. For the music a score has been prepared, and even Kiyokawa has mapped out the relations between the operation of the puppets and the music on a chart. Rather than just stick to custom for its own sake, transmitting custom to future generations is a more urgent problem. Indeed, sticking too strongly to an old custom sometimes may even prevent its transmission.

Thus one can feel how great the power of the Association for the Preservation of the Float is, and how important it is. Some might even be tempted to think that it would be best to entrust everything to the Association. This would change things radically. If everything were put into the hands of the Preservation Association it would make the Association into a specialized artistic association that would no longer be related to the parishoners, the *ujiko*. In addition, it is the position of the Association that the *ujiko* should participate in the matsuri, because they are the underlying force that makes the matsuri a success. This is the reason behind the fact that the Association itself includes two *ujiko* among its members, one as vice-chairman and another as manager. But this is more a matter of form than of giving them a real

role to play.

Although preservation at the hands of an assembly that represents eight different neighborhoods is more difficult than when done by a uniform body, the chairman has courageously opted for an effort of preservation by a collective. When it is the turn of his own neighborhood, Sumiyoshi-chō, the music which once went with this community's *kasui* float is not used in the matsuri, however. He certainly does not lack feelings that tell him to transmit the music, the pride of the *kasui* float, but if he gave way to them it would mean that the chairman himself had betrayed the position of the Association to continue the matsuri as a collective endeavor.

Yet even with so much insistence on collective preservation, each neighborhood still has its different methods. And the Association cannot intervene more than see to it that the yearly rotation system is observed faithfully.

It might even be the case that an additional load has been put on the Association. This is a result of a negative attitude toward the matsuri within the community which says that since there is a Preservation Association, everything should just be left to it. Although it may look as if there were really no need for the Association to lend a helping hand in a particular case, the actual situation is more complex. For instance, the district of Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine is very large and also includes largely depopulated areas like Teppō-chō, Suehiro-chō, and Sumiyoshi-chō. It is lined with wholesale shops, stores and offices. Although it seems to bustle with life, this is mainly due to the people who come to work here during the day, for the population that remains at night is small.

The Wakamiya Association for the Preservation of the Float provides the ground upon which to foster the integration of the matsuri. However, it is bound by a dilemma so that it cannot just go ahead as it pleases, due to its relationship with each of the neighborhoods. But, in spite of such headaches, the Association has one opportunity where it can find pleasure in investing all its energy without regard to those worries. This is the Nagoya Festival.

*Nagoya Festival: a festival without a deity.* Every year in the fall the Nagoya Festival is held. During festival days a crowd sharing the same interests gathers around the floats.

Nagoya Festival was designed by City Hall, and is a festival without a deity, i.e. without religious content. It is a sightseeing event that revolves around Nagoya's three heroes (Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Oda Nobunaga, and Tokugawa Ieyasu). Nine floats, all Designated Cultural

Assets of Nagoya, take part in the festival's parade.

Once I was told by an inhabitant of Deki-machi: "If we had a float magnificent enough to be allowed to participate in the Nagoya Festival, all of us would certainly show much more enthusiasm . . ." Nagoya Festival is the stage for a gala performance. To be invited to perform there is special honor for the float. Since so many floats have been destroyed in the war, those which were lucky enough to have survived line up at the Nagoya Festival.

When there were seven floats to enliven the Wakamiya matsuri, they all competed in polishing their techniques, but now, since only one is left, nothing like that happens. Now, it is the Nagoya Festival when feelings of competition come alive once again. It is as if Nagoya City were the shrine, and the floats with their groups its *ujiko* competing with each other. I have asked myself why people are attracted to the Nagoya Festival even though it is only a tourist event with no religious content. As the proverb goes, there is nothing like seeing for oneself! The floats I saw at the Nagoya Festival were the same I had already seen elsewhere. But where did that grand and magnificent air they displayed come from?

Once they displayed their artistry and skill in front of the Lord of the castle; now the floats dance in front of City Hall, where the Mayor has his seat. Each of the nine floats receives a large bottle (1.8 litres) of *sake* from the Mayor and then they take turns exhibiting their technique. After that they turn around and file back into the parade. The really interesting part here is the change of directions which has to be performed once the float has finished its exhibition of skill in handling the dolls. The first float makes an ordinary turn of 90° and then rolls away toward the parade. The next group, however, full of vigor, has the float make a full turn, prompting an ovation from the crowd. Again, the next group joins the competition, having its float make two turns, then turn away in triumph.

Under the eyes of a crowd of onlookers, the floats proceed slowly, gently swinging along the main street. On other occasions the group attached to a float would have to pay attention to passing cars and could not pull the floats with full force, but the Nagoya Festival differs in this respect as well. Here they do not have to be ashamed, they can pull their floats as they please, full of pride.

Though it differs markedly from a true matsuri, at Nagoya Festival—which is no smaller or less gorgeous than the former Wakamiya festival—the enthusiasm of people connected with the matsuri is alive. Nagoya Festival seems to exist in order to supplement the true matsuri, which have been more and more reduced in size. Nagoya Festival's

role is to preserve the most important aspect of any matsuri, the emotions of the people.

The Wakamiya Association for the Preservation of the Float is a group of true matsuri enthusiasts. It is therefore natural that they enjoy Nagoya Festival even more.

#### VII. OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

All the floats that survive at present must tackle similar problems—successors, technique, and costs. It might seem, therefore, that new solutions would emerge, if those who are laboring under similar worries would only get together and talk to each other about their common problems. Things are not, however, that easy. Several traditions have already disappeared, but still each group likes to think of its own float as being the best of all, which is an attitude that has deep roots. These people might be able to speak without inhibition to a complete outsider about their problems, but when they confront another float group they are prone to show an attitude of wanting to preserve their own float by themselves. Basically they want to protect the secrets surrounding their float.

The only occasion where there is some exchange with other groups is the preliminary deliberations of the Committee for the Nagoya Festival, before the festival. The keepers of all floats to participate in the Nagoya Festival are present at this meeting. They decide on the order of the floats in the parade and make applications for subsidies. But their coming together is not the least an occasion to talk together and learn from each other's strengths.

The Association for the Preservation of the Float recruits enthusiasts on a wide scale without asking about age, sex or shrine affiliation. They also try to think of new methods of preservation. It would appear that the simplest way to ask for technical help would be to approach the members of other float groups, but this does not happen. As preservation has become increasingly difficult, and it has become evident that they can no longer preserve the traditions alone, will they, one might ask, for the first time, join hands with others sharing the same situation? The Association's chairman's answer to this question was a simple "No!"

No doubt those who strive today to preserve the floats are people who have had a close relationship with the floats since their childhood days. Nostalgic longing for a once experienced lucent past is certainly one of the motives that makes these people engaged in efforts to preserve it. But those who are to take over in the future lack this longing for the past, and were in addition to this brought up in times that offer

plenty of other amusements, so they have lost the enthusiasm for the matsuri. They do not think of a matsuri as something they have to make and to conduct themselves, they rather think of it as something that is prepared for them to be watched. Once the floats have been transferred into the hands of such a generation, there will be no movement to tie up with other communities to help preserve the expensive floats. They do not feel this commission any more, and the treasures will rot in their hands. It is a saddening prospect, but most probably the younger generation will not hesitate at all to part with the floats.

The district of Wakamiya, the center of Nagoya's youth for the next generation, may be typical in this respect. And yet, in spite of this, the Fukurokuju float shall remain, if only because it is a shrine treasure of Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine. Just this fact may well, as it turns out now, have been to the advantage of the float. As a shrine treasure there will be very little chance that the Fukurokuju float will further be sold. Its outward form shall therefore remain.

A matsuri that has been handed down for many years is invested with its own particular customs and traditions. But it is at the same time made again and again by the people. The relationship of a matsuri to its people is therefore contrastive. A matsuri might stagnate in its form, but the people within this form move ahead together with the advance of time. Even in former times, the matsuri must also have had to some extent the ability to adjust to new situations as dictated by the people or the techniques of the time, but now, when life has turned away from the matsuri's happy time, traditions and customs have disappeared and the matsuri itself has changed its contents, even though it may still preserve its old external form. As a result, the form as such may remain, but the tradition, its life, does not.

The Fukurokuju float has now been a shrine treasure for thirty years. Twenty years ago the Wakamiya Association for the Preservation of the Float was founded. This took place after an age in which all the *ujiko* had found pleasure in staging the matsuri and even saw this as their natural obligation. Then the float has been given into the hands of a group of specialized supporters. The parade has been revived, the heavily damaged Chinese boy that stands on its hand and the wheels of the float have been repaired, the curtain of brocade has been re-staurated. This might indeed be the most interesting period in the history of the Fukurokuju float. The future outlook of floats in general may be pessimistic, but the Fukurokuju float is surrounded by people who love it. At least for the time being this may well be the best period for the Fukurokuju float since its revival.

## NOTES

1. It is said that the watchmaker Takeda Ōmi made mechanical puppets after getting the idea from watching children playing in the sand. The clever and ingenious manner he used incorporates elements belonging to watch making, such as cog-wheels and springs, and earned him much acclaim. The mechanical puppets thus represented the highest level of precision machine techniques of their time, derived from the *wadokei* 和時計, or Japanese style watches.

2. The following is a list of the seven floats that were once used:

Name of float	Ward	Description
<i>Kurofune</i> 黒船 Black ship float	Suehiro Ward	No puppets. The float's shape, that of a ship, is unusual.
<i>Hotei</i> 布袋 float	Tamaya Ward	Chinese boys writing a number of ideograms
<i>Seiōbo</i> 西王母 Mother of the Western Paradise float	Tamaya Ward	Once had a Chinese boy jumping out of a peach which broke into two parts. It has been remade so that the boy now rides on another's shoulders and then beats a drum while hanging from a tree branch.
<i>Jurōjin</i> 寿老人 float	Nakasuga Ward	As soon as one of the Chinese boys beats the drum the other puts on a lion mask and plays with red and white peonies, a scene based on the Noh play <i>Shakkyō</i> . 石橋
<i>Fukurokuju</i> 福祿寿 float	Ōkubomi Ward	Puppet stands on its hand and beats a gong.
<i>Kasui</i> 河水 float	Sumiyoshi Ward	A dragon god emerges from a drum and dances.
<i>Ryō-ō</i> 陸王 float	Monzen Ward	Tenjin blows the flute and Ryō-ō dances to its melody.

3. This rod is a four-sided pole. Each side is fitted with pieces of brass made into claws. By pulling the strings attached to the end of the pole, the claws are applied to the inside of the puppet in such a way as to transmit the power that moves it (Fig. 5).

4. The *Nihon Hyakka Daijiten* explains the connection between the South Pole Star and Fukurokuju in the following manner:

Jurōjin, the deity of long life, who occupies the leading position of the Seven Gods of Luck, was once called in China "Old Man Star of the South Pole." This was the name of a star that brings about good fortune. From about the time of the Sung or Yüan dynasty in China (Japanese Muromachi period) Jurōjin became personified and figures of him were made. Because different representations appeared later, however, Fukurokuju was also created. He appeared first on the boat of the Seven Gods of Luck also as the "Old Man of the South Pole," or as Jurōjin, but later on this representation was divided into two deities, Jurōjin and Fukurokuju. Both were then put into the boat, as two different representations of the same deity.

5. These are the costs to be shouldered by the neighborhood that is responsible for the staging of the matsuri when its turn comes around every eighth year.

6. The different kinds of *hayashi* music performed are *gaku* 楽; *Michiyuki Kagura*

道行神楽, *ningyō bayashi* 人形囃子, *kyōgen kagura* 狂言神楽, *sanbasō* 三番叟, and *hayakan* 早神楽.

7. The Fukui School is the particular school for the playing of the flute of the Owari-Han, to whose domain Nagoya formerly belonged.

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Fig. 1. The Fukurokuju float with Fukurokuju and the two Chinese boys on top and the staff-swinging puppet in front.



Fig. 2. The humorous staff swinger.



Fig. 3. The main stage for the puppets with Fukurokuju and the two Chinese boys.



Fig. 4. The leading Chinese boy standing on his hand on a pedestal of lotus flowers and beating a gong.



Fig. 5. The puppeteer. He holds the rod in his hands to operate the Chinese boy so that it will stand on its hand. (An independent puppet.)



Fig. 6. Fukurokuju and the Chinese boy with the supporting role.



Fig. 7. Operating the Chinese boy with the supporting role. (A stringed puppet.)



Fig. 8. Two old heads of Fukurokuju which have survived from former times. Left: eyes can be rolled. Right: the mouth shows signs that once the tongue could be stuck out.