

Edited by Hyotan Editors Club

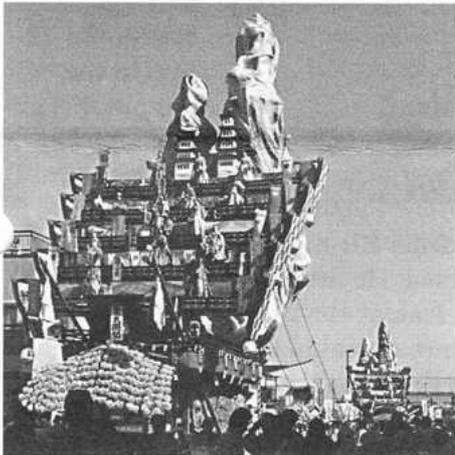
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Phone: 0294-22-3111 ex534 Fax: 0294-24-5302

E-mail: kokubun@ray.hidecnet.ne.jp

Hitachi Furyumono and the Festival

On the 3rd, 4th, and 5th of May, four floats of



'Hitachi Furyumono' (designated important tangible and/or intangible cultural property of Japan) were open to the public at Daioin *dori* (street) in

Hitachi. The origin of Furyumono goes back to 1695 when floats were dedicated to Kamine Shinto Shrine during religious festivals. In Shintoism, festivals mean that deities and people communicate through certain rites on specific dates. In any region in Japan, where there is a shrine, there are usually festivals being held.

On the 4th of May, a God climbed down Mt. Kamine from the inner shrine near the top of Mt. Kamine and progressed around the precinct of the shrine with Shinto priests, children and many parishioners. At several important places, they performed ritual ceremonies. There, children perform the *Sasara* dance, playing the part of lions and bears, who are thought to be brave heralds for God. In the past, the Furyumono floats were also in parades. They must have been magnificent spectacles. However, in recent years, due to traffic problems and other reasons, the floats are no longer part of these parades.

Furyumono is a puppet show operated by steel wires, performed onstage on the float. They say that it was devised in the early 18th century imitating *ningyo joruri* (a puppet theater with chanted narration) which was very popular at that time in Tokyo and Osaka area. The floats are 2.1meters wide and 6.6meters long. On the floats are stages for the shows, with settings of 15 meter high mountains.

The sound of clappers signals the opening of

the show, then drums, flutes, and *sho* (a kind of metallic percussion instrument) begin to play cheerful and lively music. Five-storied stages are open across to about 7 meters wide one after another. On every stage, puppets play a favorite scene respectively and five scenes remind us of one story.

A *samurai* (warrior) is brandishing his sword on the horse back, a young page shooting an arrow, a man rowing a boat. How do the manipulators pull the wires in the narrow space under the stage for the puppets' complicated movement? Suddenly the puppets change into other roles by tumbling down in an instant. It creates a stir amongst the audience. While they are staring at the girl puppets dancing with parasols or flowers, the stage itself turns around slowly to the back stage, which is quite different from the front.

People in the four towns in the precinct of Kamine Shinto Shrine have been vying for superiority of their puppet show and making it more and more refined and elegant. ("Furyumono" means something refined or elaborately designed.) For more than 300 years, town people have been repeating the same process, talking over the title of the next performance,



making *kashira*(heads of puppets), sewing kimonos for the puppets, practicing *narimono* (the music), besides their daily

work. Most floats and *kashira* were lost in the war disasters in 1945, but the eagerness of the people restored Furyumono again in 1958.

Furyumono receives wonderful words of praise not only during festivals, but also when it's open to public on various events. It is regrettable however,

in 1992, the town people decided to practice the great festival, the procession and the performance of Furiyumono with all four floats after a gap of every seven years. Surely children are able to enrich their minds abundantly through the precious experiences of these festivals such as

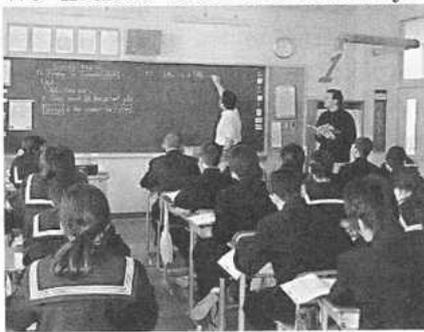
playing the most important roles in the ritual ceremony looked after by elders, drawing heavy and unstable floats with many comrades, and seeing the splendid tradition of their home town.

Sukegawa Junior High School

Sukegawa Junior High School began by borrowing a school building, Nissei Seinen School (currently Hitachi Kougyo High School) in 1947. In the following year, it merged with Ose Junior High School on September 10. This day became the anniversary of the founding of this school. In 1951, the school moved to the present premises.

The principal of the school is Mr. Shigeyuki Kashimura. His ideals for the school are introduced in five simple phrases, which are, "cheerful", "no-bullying", "beautiful", "filled with smiles" and "compassionate".

We noticed that the hallways and classrooms were very clean. The students were very polite during our visit. Isn't it difficult to teach junior high school students to



have such good manners? Mr. Kitazawa, the vice-principal answered our question. He said it is not like imposing rules or teaching strictly, the teachers only tell the students the essentials, then trust the students and watch them warmly. These attitudes cause a chain reaction of trust between teachers and students.

Regarding information technology(IT) education, the school had been the designated school by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology from 2001 to 2003. IT education is one of the areas which have been worked on eagerly at the school. They have 6 personal computers in the



hallways so that any student can browse homepages freely, and 42 PCs in the computer room for IT classes.

Mr. John Noland from Birmingham, USA, has been the ALT of the school. He assists with every English lesson. We took a look at the 2nd year's English lesson. The students repeated new words and phrases after Mr. Ikenaga, the English teacher and Mr. Noland. During a role-play, they scattered and found partners to practice dialogues. Mr. Noland also moved around and helped students with expressions and pronunciation. Mr. Ikenaga thinks that thanks to Mr. Noland, the students have less of a mental barrier towards speaking English.

There are ten kinds of extra curricular clubs. More than 90% of the students belong to one of the clubs. The sports clubs are baseball, soccer, volleyball, table tennis, soft tennis, *judo* and *kendo*. The cultural clubs are brass band, and "culture activity club" which works on various cultural things like drama and pottery.

Some informations:

The gyms of the school are open for local people after school and on holidays.

The PE festival and the choral singing contest in autumn can be observed.

International Exchange

In Hitachi city, there are more than 30 groups taking part in international exchange activities. In this series, we would like to introduce some of them.

"Friendly Anzu"

When you hear about "Friendly Anzu", you might simply recognize it as Japanese language

classes held by volunteers. But some of their activities go back to 20 years ago. In 1985, the late Ms. Nakagawa, who was dispatched to South Asia by International Women's Education Association for research on educational situation, reported in the meeting that so many children do not have the opportunity to learn in those countries. She suggested Ms. Kyoko Kamada (the present President of Friendly Anzu) to show a movie "A teacher in the country" of which scene was laid in



the Northeast region of Thailand. Thanks to the support of 60 executive committees of 15 groups such as PTA

and cultural affairs groups in Hitachi city, the running of this movie spread to various places in Ibaraki prefecture. The profit made by the movie resulted in setting up Hitachi branch office of SAEFI (Supporting Asian Education Fund Ibaraki). This is the first step of this group's activity and they have moved ahead aiming for international collaboration. In 2002, the group was named "Friendly Anzu," which is associated with one of the popular trees in Hitachi city. The current Japanese members are 73 while foreigners from 13 different countries are 50.

The main activities are as follows:

- (1) Overseas educational support:
 - Promotion of literacy education by a mobile library in Thailand and Laos
 - Workshop for making teaching materials and raising skilled teachers
 - Receiving trainees for practical training at kindergartens
 - Marketing handicrafts made by Asian women
- (2) Japanese language class:
 - Established in 1995, held on every Tuesdays and Fridays in a small group per level

Can join any time, as there are no semester systems

- (3) Thai language class
 - Held on the second and the forth Saturday by a volunteer who used to study in Japanese language class. Around 10 people are regularly studying.
- (4) World cooking class:
 - Held every other month to introduce various cooking of each country
 - Popular and always crowded. Maximum participants 20.
- (5) Flower arrangement class
 - Held twice a month (the second Wednesday & Friday) to enjoy Japanese four seasons and deepen understanding of Japanese culture. ¥300 for materials
- (6) Publicity activities:
 - Publication of "Friendly Anzu" 4 times a year

Ms. Kamada and Mr. Kohsaka in charge of Japanese language class stated their hopes as follows: "To promote various activities for world peace, understanding for Japanese culture and overseas educational support, we need more volunteers. As for the members of Japanese language class, it is desirable for them to continue studying until reaching a certain level. It is also necessary to secure the place where many people can get together. Furthermore, it is important for both Japanese and foreigners to work out mutually for better understanding of each other's culture."

If you are interested in their activities and can spare a few hours, please join in "Friendly Anzu". We are sure you will be most welcomed.

Japanese Culture and Social Customs Part 4 Good luck symbols

The Frog (Kaeru カエル)

What do you think when you think of a frog? Do you think of a cute creature or something grotesque? The rainy season has started in June, and gloomy days continue with high temperature and high humidity. Frogs have started croaking. It is their favorite season. Well, frogs are known to be endowed with magical powers, and they are seen as auspicious creatures bringing good fortune. The reason comes from its peculiarity. Due to the very large number of eggs (about 1500) it lays each time, it had become a symbol of fertility, rebirth and abundance.

The frog is also a popular symbol for Japanese people, who call it "kaeru". It has a lucky sound "kaeru" in Japanese, for example, to return money, return home safely, return a good fortune and return youth. People have frog charms as traffic and traveling safety, or decorate frog figures on their shoe cupboards at the front door and wait for their family



to return home safely. As for returning money, they put the small images (about 1cm) in the wallet to increase their own money.

There are more than 2500 different species of frogs all over the world, inhabiting our living regions. Local people believe them as the god of rainfall and good harvests in Japan. In ancient Egypt, frogs were so important, and they sometimes put frog figures on the mummy to hope rebirth of the dead. In China, the three-legged toad was a traditional pet of the god of the wealth. In Chinese culture today the frog, often seen as a statue with a gold coin in its mouth, is still associated with riches.

Events

Date	Event & Main Attractions	Place	Admission	Inquiry
3 rd -5 th (Sun) 8:00-17:00	Exhibition of Small Bonsai and Dwarf Azalea	Kyo-iku Plaza (Right Opposite Hitachi P.H.)	Free	Mr. Kanesawa Tel 42-4587
11 th (Sat) 9:30-13:00	"Herb Class" in Kirara-no-sato (Cooking with herbs)	Kirara-no-sato Kirara Kan (Hall)	¥2000 incl. adm. fee	Kirara-no-sato Tel 24-2424
12 th (Sun) 11-15	The Kanto Region Karaoke Singers Championship Series	Hitachi Public Hall	Free (Numbers ticket req.)	Hitachi Public Hall Tel 22-6483
18 th (Sat) 13:00	Ms. Sato & Konishi Piano Concert	Hitachi Civic Center Music Hall	Free	Hitachi Civic Center Tel 24-7711
19 th (Sun) 15:00	"Reiko Ballet School" Ballet Recital	Hitachi Public Hall	Free	Hitachi Public Hall Tel 22-6483
19 th (Sun) 10:00	Citizens' Singles Bowling Meet (3 games match)	9:30 at "Plabi-bowl" in Chikoku-cho	Adult ¥2000 Child ¥1500	Mr. Takahashi Tel 34-0101
19 th (Sun) 9:30-13:00	Cooking Class with Fresh Fish And Shellfish Just Landed	Izumi-ga-mori Public Hall	¥1500 incl. present	Agriculture & Fisheries Sec. of CH Ex. 276
25 th (Sat)-26 th (Su) 13:30	Movie "Hashi Monogatari" written by Shuhei Fujisawa	"Odaira Kaikan" Hall in Jonan-cho	¥1000 Child Free	ART Raku-gaki Tel 23-1112
26 th (Sun) 14:00	Female Ensemble "LOTUS" Recital	Hitachi Civic Center Music Hall	¥1000 ¥500 *	Hitachi Civic Center Tel 24-7711
26 th (Sun) 14:00	Koto Music Concert by Hitachi Sankyoku Association	Hitachi Civic Center Multi-purpose Hall	Free	Hitachi Civic Center Tel 24-7711

NH: National Holiday

C.H.: City Hall (Tel: 22-3111) * High school student and younger

Japanese Language Classes

NAME	LOCATION	DATE & TIME	Fee	Contact
Sakura	Shichokaku Center etc.	Saturday 10:00-11:30	¥1,800/semester	Ms. Haruko Yada Tel (0294) 36-3529
	Kyoiku Plaza	Thursday 10:00-11:30	¥1,800/semester	
Sakura (Kanji)		Friday 10:00-11:30	¥1,800/semester	
Anzu	Shichokaku Center	Tuesday 19:00-20:45	¥300/month Ms. Keiko Kanaoka	Mr. Shichizoh Koksaka Tel/Fax (0294) 35-3989 Koksaka73@ybb.ne.jp
	Kyoiku Plaza	Friday 14:00-16:00	Tel/Fax (0294)42-8176	

Movies in June

Theater	Day	Titles (Original Titles)
Cinefesta 1&2 Tel:21-7472	-	Meitantei Conan [J]
	-	Ladder 49 [E]
	-	Million Dollar Baby[E]
	4	Densha Otoko[J]
Hitachi Central Tel:21-1386	-	Koshonin Mashita
	11	Masayoshi[J] Sengoku Jieitai [J]
Aigakan 1&2 Tel:23-2323	-3	Closer [E]
	4	Yokkakan no Kiseki[J]
	-	Kingdom of Heaven [E]

J: Japanese E: English

Emergency Doctors on Duty

Hitachi uses a system called "TOBAN-F". The doctors in the city take turns standing by for emergency patients from 9:00 to 16:00 on Sundays and national holidays.

Surgeons

No.	Surgeon's Name	Address	Phone
5	Naito seikei-geka Iin	Higashionuma-cho	53-1833
12	Shimada Geka Iin	Omika-cho	53-4888
19	Heiwadai Shinohara Clinic	Suwa-cho	34-6800
26	Sasaki Icho-geka	Orikasa-cho	43-0333

Physicians, Pediatricians and Dentists seven days a week: Hitachi Medical Center (5-1-1 Higashitaga-cho)
Tel 0294-34-2105

Thank you for reading the Hyotan. If you'd like to inquire about anything, please send us a letter, fax or e-mail. Any subject is welcome. We are looking forward to receiving your letter.

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