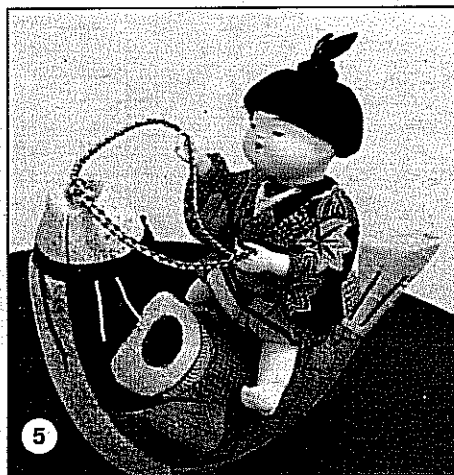
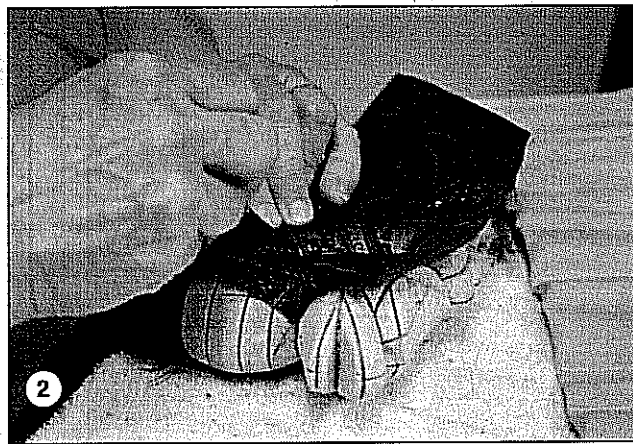


Japanese Crafts 日本の伝統工芸

Kimekomi doll-making tradition carried on in Northern California



1 — Instructor Isako Wasano (right) teaches student Jeanne Nakamura (left) during a Mataro *kimekomi* doll-making workshop in Sacramento, Calif.
 2 — Mary Stroube tucks silk fabric in the grooves of her dragon doll mold with a double-sided blade tool.
 3 — Connie Yee works on her Year of the Horse plaque. Yee will complete one plaque for each animal in the Chinese Zodiac for the Cupertino Cherry Blossom Festival.
 4 — Ron Uyemori (left) and Akiko Daiki (right) work on their dolls during Wasano's ACC Senior Services class in Sacramento, Calif.
 5 — Sara Teranishi completed this doll for her grandson as a gift for *Kodomo no Hi* (Children's Day). She bought the kit in Tokyo, but it did not come with fabric so she coordinated the fabric patterns and colors herself.

photos by Heather Ito/Nichi Bei Weekly

By HEATHER ITO
 Nichi Bei Weekly Contributor

No sewing or porcelain bodies for these traditional Japanese dolls. *Kimekomi* dolls are created using a technique of the same name, which loosely translates to "push (fabric) into wood to form a pattern."

"They were so beautiful. (That) is what drew me in," said beginning *Mataro kimekomi* doll-making student, Mary Stroube. "(My co-worker) would tell me some of the history and what dolls meant or what this configuration of something meant, so that was interesting too."

Stroube attended her first *kimekomi* doll-making class in Sacramento, Calif. at ACC Senior Services a year and-a-half ago with her sister, and has been attending ever since. Stroube said her sister enjoyed the class so much, she tried to find the nearest *kimekomi* doll-making class when she returned to her home in Virginia. She now commutes to a class in Maryland.

According to a history brochure written by the Northern California Shibu Mataro Miyabi Kai, this style of doll making began during the Genbun period (1736-1741) by a shrine worker at the Kamigamo Shrine in Kyoto. The worker, Tadashige Takahashi, carved small figures out of leftover willow wood from boxes made for the shrine's annual festival and dressed the dolls using fabric scraps from the *Shinto* priest robes.

Takahashi used the *kimekomi* technique and attached the fabric by tucking the edges of it into grooves he carved in the wood figures. Before doing that, he added a small amount of glue in the grooves to keep the fabric in place.

Over the years, several different people learned the technique, each one changing it slightly. During the Meiji era, Eikichi Yoshino, a well-known crafter in Tokyo, went to Kyoto to learn the traditional method of *kimekomi* doll-making. Yoshino's work grounded the modern *kimekomi* technique observed today, with a few of his original ideas.

Yoshino passed down what he studied to his son, Kiyoji, who later taught Mataro Kanabayashi I. Adding his own creativity to the doll-making technique, Kanabayashi perfected the contemporary technique now observed for *Mataro* dolls.

The main difference between *Mataro* dolls and other *kimekomi*-style dolls is the quality of material. According to Mataro Doll Craft Academy certified instructor

Masanori (Isako) Wasano, *Mataro* dolls use high-quality fabric, like silk, and the doll bodies are covered with *gohun*, an oyster shell powder, to make the body stronger. Nowadays, however, Wasano said Mataro Doll Craft Academy also uses regular brown doll bodies, which are coarse and brittle without the *gohun* coating.

Today, *Mataro* dolls can be seen at various Japanese festivals in the U.S., like the annual Cupertino Cherry Blossom Festival. *Kimekomi* doll-making instructors and students from the Northern California Shibu Mataro Miyabi Kai have displayed their collection of *Mataro* dolls at the festival for 28 years, according to Wasano, who is the chapter's director. Wasano has more than 50 years of experience studying *Mataro kimekomi* doll-making with the academy.

Born and raised in Japan, Wasano began studying *kimekomi* doll-making under the Mataro Doll Craft Academy at 17 years old and became a certified teacher about three years later. In 1969, when she was in her mid-20s, Wasano moved to the U.S. in order to advance her college education. She attended California State University, Sacramento and American River College.

Wasano began teaching *kimekomi* doll-making classes in the U.S. when a few people found out she knew how to make the dolls while she was teaching Japanese language at the Buddhist Church of Florin.

"When people come over to my house, then they learn about my *kimekomi* dolls. Then they say, 'Wow!' and I say, 'Yeah, I have a teacher's certificate, so...' 'Oh! Why don't you teach us?'" Wasano said.

Wasano began teaching *kimekomi* doll-making to Buddhist Church of Florin members in 1975 while still teaching Japanese language at the church. The classes began with two women taking lessons at Wasano's home. When the church gave her space to teach lessons there, attendance for her class grew to about 16 students.

Since then, Wasano has opened several *kimekomi* doll-making classes at places like the West Valley chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League. Now, Wasano teaches once a month during the spring and fall sessions in Sacramento, San Jose and Watsonville.

One of the differences between *kimekomi* dolls and other methods of doll-making is that no sewing is required. Instead, the fabric is glued in the grooves of the doll's body using a glue mixture made of *mochiko*

(rice flour) and *fueki* glue (craft glue). According to Wasano, this *mochiko*-based glue is easier for beginners to use because if a mistake is made, the glue can easily be washed off the fabric before it dries completely.

Although the first *kimekomi* dolls were carved out of wood, Yoshino invented a new method of molding the doll base that allowed for mass production and greater availability. He mixed sawdust from paulownia tree wood with glue to mold the doll's hollow base.

The head, hands and feet are pre-made in kits and are attached after the doll crafter is done adding the fabric to the doll body.

Wasano said each doll is modeled after Japanese historical figures. Each doll's background is so important that deviating from its historical aspects when creating the doll can change the meaning of the doll's history drastically.

When a student starts working on a new doll, Wasano said she makes sure to explain its history and background to the student so that he or she understands who or what they are working on.

Many of Wasano's Sacramento students said learning how to make *Mataro* dolls is not the only thing they enjoy about the class.

"I enjoy the history of Japan, not only doll making but why we're doing it this way or what we're doing," said 92-year-old Mahoryoku (Midori) Baishiki, who has been studying *kimekomi* doll-making with her daughter Mahiyuki (Yuki) Baishiki under Wasano's instruction since 1994. Baishiki has completed more than 50 dolls so far and still has 15 kits to start on at home.

"I don't have much time. I figure I better get busy!" she said, laughing. Beginning student Carolyn Sawai

also said she bought a lot of kits. She said she began taking the class because her mother took a similar class about 30 years ago and has been intrigued by the dolls ever since. She also collects Japanese dolls.

"I think I have enough of these types of dolls to keep me busy until I'm 150 years old, at least!" she said.

Although Sawai said she doesn't have a lot of time outside of class to work on her dolls, the class' sociable atmosphere helps her focus on her work.

"I think it's good to have others who share the same interests and there's that motivation for me too," she said.

Wasano calls her class a "social club" and said it is structured more like a workshop than a formal class.

"They come here because they like the atmosphere, like the com-

panionship and socializing with everybody," she said.

Wasano said she likes to see how many people have taken up this traditional Japanese art over the years and encourages more people to open their own classes.

"I think this should be passed on to many, many generations because otherwise it will disappear," she said.

Kay Freeman, who has been studying *Mataro kimekomi* doll-making for about eight years, is currently working on the lowest level (level four) set of dolls for the instructor's path. Each doll in the set is designed to utilize a certain skill, which becomes progressively more difficult as the level increases. Freeman said that once she becomes certified, she intends to open a *kimekomi* doll-making class at the Stockton Buddhist Temple.

260年の伝統が「木目込まれた」真多呂人形

毎年、桜祭りの日本文化展示会とその質の高い伝統技法によって、訪れる人々の心を掴んでいるのが真多呂人形だ。今年の桜祭りですに28年目を迎える。

真多呂人形は、江戸元文年間(約260年前)に京都の上賀茂神社に仕えていた高橋忠重が作った「木目込み人形」が始まりとされている。北加真多呂雅会によると、高橋は同神社の祭りで使われた残りの木材で人形を型どり、神官服の切れ端を使ってその人形に着せた。以後、その人形は賀茂人形と呼ばれ、多くの人々がその技巧を少しずつ変えていく。

明治に入り東京の人形師・吉野栄吉が京都で賀茂人形作りの修行を積み、京都からその技術を持ち帰り、これに改良を加え、現代木目込み人形の基礎を築いた。その後、栄吉はその技術を息子である喜代治へと受け継ぎ、それを伝授し現代の木目込み人形を確立したのが初代金林真多呂だ。

真多呂人形学院の北カリフォルニア支部を受け持つ和佐野真沙典先生によると、真多呂人形と他の木目込み人形の大きな違いは織物の品質と、具裁などから作られ、絵付や顔料として主に用いられる胡粉(ごふん)を使用しているところだという。

和佐野先生は1975年からサクラメントのフローリン仏教教会で木目込み人形の作り方を教え始め、現在ではウエストバレー、サクラメント、サンゼ、ワトソンビルと教室の幅を広げ、多くの人々にこの日本の伝統技法と文化の伝授をしている。