



Gosho Ningyō: Treasure ship



Saga Ningyō: Enmei fuku no Kami
(God of happiness and longevity)

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Ningyō as Fine art

Members of the upper class and the Japanese imperial court in particular had a love for dolls of especially refined craftsmanship. One leading example of these is *Gosho Ningyō*. Fashioned after plump baby boys, they were used as gifts during celebrations at the imperial court. They are designed to show exemplary health and instilled with auspiciousness in their clothing and implements. The general shapes are made from wood or sawdust and then finished with the thick application of a white paint made from crushed shells, giving them their notable luxurious white shine.

Ishō Ningyō: Fuji Musume (Wisteria maiden)

Ishō Ningyō are art dolls dressed in garments actually made of woven fabrics. The dolls, made as display items for grownups from around the 18th century, are notable for the tiny clothing made in the same way as the real items, and the poses which demonstrate the excellence of that clothing. They are also very popular overseas for accessibly expressing traditional Japanese dress, hair styles, and theatrical act.



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Ningyō as folk art

A love for dolls has long been a part of the culture of the common people as well. Even without the use of expensive materials, colorful and fun dolls have arisen from countless examples of doll culture throughout Japan.

The folk dolls were primarily made from inexpensive materials such as clay, paper, and wood. Many were produced as a side occupation during breaks from farm work, and they provided sustenance for their simple lives.



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Spread of Ningyō culture

The well-honed skills and techniques of doll production were put to good use in the worlds of traditional performing arts and also toys. The reappraisal of dolls as art in modern times drove the emergence of many talented doll creators as works of art, and Japan's doll culture further went on to give rise to the collector's scale figures popular throughout the world today.



Oshie Hagoita: Dōjōji

Oshie is a method of cutting a thick paper along a design, wrapping each part in fabric, and then combining the parts in bas relief. For this type, the Oshie doll is further attached to a paddle used in a traditional Japanese game much like badminton. It is believed that displaying it dispels misfortune. This example depicts the lead character of the extravagant scene from Kabuki play Dōjōji who is a girl with a single-minded love.



Ichimatsu Ningyo



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Collector figure: