



Takehaya Susanono mikoto (shitagashi)
 ① Meiji 31st year (1898) ② The latter half of Edo era (kō-en, immensity) ③ The life-sized figure is manufactured in the form of Happa-hirami (stating at or watching all sides) and so this figure may glare rigidly at you from whichever angle you see it.



Jinmu tennō (nakagashi)
 ① Meiji 31st year (1898) ② Meiji 31st year (1898) ③ (hirokoto-ten-no-gotoshi, boundless expanse like heaven) ④ (shimo-wake, name of town block) ⑤ Just like the stage of the Noh play, the whole frame of the float is lacquered with continuous colors of teal-eyes, apricot-zabala with beautiful ornate rope, produced in Kyoto.



Shonankō (Kusunoki masatsura, Masashige jr.) (Shimowake)
 ① Meiji 28th year (1895) ② Shōwa 10th year (1935) ③ (hirokoto-ten-no-gotoshi, boundless expanse like heaven) ④ (shimo-wake, name of town block) ⑤ Just like the stage of the Noh play, the whole frame of the float is lacquered with continuous colors of teal-eyes, apricot-zabala with beautiful ornate rope, produced in Kyoto.



Autumn Festival
 15 festival floats
 Fri., Sat. & Sun., on the second weekend of October



Ninigino mikoto (Nishisekido)
 ① Shōwa 10th year (1935) ② Shōwa 15th year (1940) ③ (shin-wakae-eki, god's glory) ④ The frame edge decorated with Ishikawa-Tomomitsu's work. The characters on the four sides, and pillars uncovered. The calligraphy was the work written by Anma-Ryōkyū, chief priest of Meiji-jingu.



Dainankō (Kusunoki Masashige) (Higashisekido)
 ① Shōwa 10th year (1935) ② Shōwa 10th year (1935) ③ (jun-sei, genuine purity) ④ The carvings on the four sides, and pillars uncovered. The calligraphy was the work written by General Sadao-Araki.



Minamoto Yoriyoshi (Shimajuku)
 ① Meiji 8th year (1875) ② Mei 32th year (1899) ③ (sei-i, sincerity) ④ The historical event that Minamoto-no-Yoriyoshi managed to smash the rocks with a bow and come upon a water vein at the battle of Yamanaka.



Chinzei Hachirō Tametomo (Kaminakajuku)
 ① Kaei 5th year (1852) ② Meiji 15th year (1882) ③ (carving of Mt. Fuji) ④ The carvings surrounding the float skillfully hide the pillars on four corners, and there the view of the grand hunting at the foot of Mt. Fuji is panoramically laid out.



Ota Dōkan (Kaminakachō)
 ① Meiji 34th year (1901) ② Taishō 10th year (1921) ③ (toku-, power of virtue) ④ The curtain lavishly woven with spun gold, in Bunraku period (1804-1817), highly appreciated as cultural property



Sugawara Michizane (Shimonakachō)
 ① Bunsei 5th year (1822) ② Taishō 10th year (1921) ③ (shō-toku, respect for virtue) ④ Oldest existing float in Sawara ascertained from the ancient documents found in Heisei 24th year (2012). The strings of beads at the front side and the curtains around produced in Ansei 3rd year (1855).



Summer Festival
 10 festival floats
 Fri., Sat. & Sun., on the second or third weekend of July when Friday first falls on a two-digit day.



Takemikazuchino mikoto (Hamajuku)
 ① Heisei 9th year (1997) ② Shōwa 12th year (1937) ③ (nyū-wa, gentleness) ④ The completion of carvings took four years during the early years of Kaei period (1848-1854)



Carp (Yōkaichiba)
 ① Meiji 20th year (1896) ② Bunyō years (1861-1863) ③ The wood-carved dragon ④ The fish of barley-straw by townfolk



Ameno Uzumeno mikoto (Hogashiji)
 ① Meiji 15th year (1882) ② Later Edo era, refurbished after Second World War ③ (shō-raku, radiant smile) ④ The roof-top gracefully constructed as the theater stage for the dancing deity.



Hutsunushino mikoto (Araku)
 ① Shōwa 3rd year (1928) ② Taishō 9th year (1920) ③ (toku, power of virtue) ④ The chief deity of Kato-jingu. Skilled wood-carvings around the float, especially the ones over the pillars of four corners.



Ushi tenjin (shinuwagashi)
 ① Meiji 28th year (1895) ② Later Edo era (1850-1868) ③ (kawa-gashira, town-block name) ④ The figure of Sugawara-Michizane, spirit of wonder, riding a black ox on the year of the ox. And the splendid ornamental wood-carvings laid out at the right and left ends of the float sides of the float structure, vividly depict the exploits of the priesthood, hero of the War of Hogen-and-Heiji period (1156-1159).



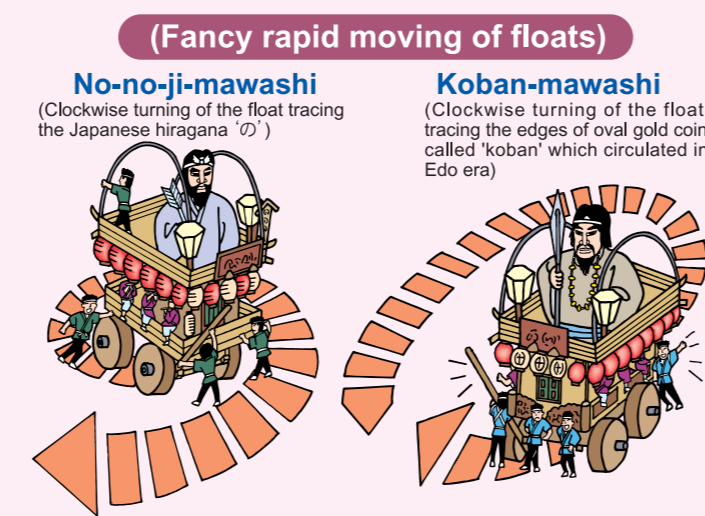
Urashima Tarō (Shimoshinmachi)
 ① Later Edo era (1800-1868) ② Meiji 12nd year (1879) ③ (on-ryō, emperor's benevolence) ④ The gate spaced straw festoons and the carvings are gravely and well reproduced from the wood block prints, the best scenes of the Suikō-den (a Chinese picaresque).



Yamato Takeruno mikoto (Kitayokojuku)
 ① Meiji 8th year (1875) ② Meiji 8th year (1875) ③ (ka-i-koku, love of the country) ④ Yatai-no-tagami, sacred mirror as one of the three imperial treasures and big sakaki (evergreen japonica), with streamers on both sides.

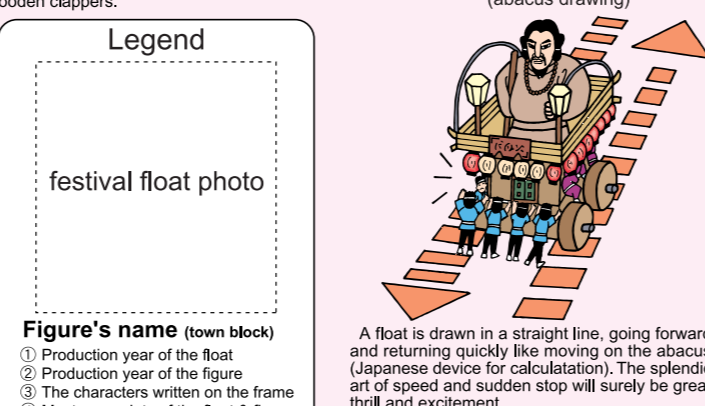


Suwa daijin (Kamisinmachi)
 ① Shōwa 11th year (1936) ② Shōwa 11th year (1936) ③ (ka-i-shin, respect for gods) ④ Yatai-no-tagami, sacred mirror as one of the three imperial treasures and big sakaki (evergreen japonica), with streamers on both sides.



There are two ways to do spinning or turning; one is to start turning after a temporary pause for preparation and the other is to start turning without any pause heading into the performing site, which is called 'Mawashi-kōmi'. Moving is slow, but never stop the turnings. It has been thought utter shame or disgrace to stop the turning even for a moment before the signal by wooden clappers.

Pushing the float ovally tracing the shape of 'kōban' is very hard to perform, and keeping the regular speed of turnings and handling at each corner need high degree of skill.



Momotarō (Nakajuku)
 ① Later Edo Era (1800s) ② Taishō 11st year (1922) ③ (hi-en, densely-rising columns of smoke, symbol of people's wellbeing). ④ Since Shōwa 30s years this float has never been open to the public.



Onono tōhū (shinhashimoto)
 ① Meiji 27th year (1884) ② Meiji 4th year (1871) ③ (un-ryō, dragon rising in clouds) ④ Yoshi-tsune standing majestically on the mountain pass, the Hyōdori-goe, at the last battle fought in 1184 between Taira and Minamoto clans.



Minamoto Yoshitsune (Kamijuku)
 ① Shōwa 53rd year (1978) ② Shōwa 55th year (1980) ③ (chiwa-ryō, wisdom and courage) ④ Yoshi-tsune standing majestically on the mountain pass, the Hyōdori-goe, at the last battle fought in 1184 between Taira and Minamoto clans.



Nintoku tennō (Minamiyokojuku)
 ① Meiji 8th year (1875) ② Taishō 14th year (1925) ③ The walk-way (Looking down from the highest tower, how pleasant I feel to see the smoke rising from the kitchen of every home! Emperor Nintoku). ④ The whole carvings took ten years to complete. The scenes are chosen from the best stories of 'Sari-goku-shi' (the Record of the Three Kingdoms of China).



Izanagino mikoto (Tajuku)
 ① Kaei 4th year (1851) ② Meiji 43rd year (1910) ③ (yū-ka, peaceful tranquility) ④ The whole body of float japan-lacquered. The ceiling within decorated with lacquered drawings.



Kintoki Yamanba (Terajuku)
 ① Kaei 3rd year (1850) ② Meiji 12th year (1879) ③ (hei-dai, festival float) ④ Young Kin-koji, later great samurai, and his mother. The young boy riding a bear, walking a broad axe, shows the power and strength of youth.



Jinmu (Hunado)
 ① Heisei 9th year (1997) ② Meiji 20th year (1887) ③ (ō-kan, overwhelming joy) ④ Superb carvings, carp in particular



Hawk (Nijuku)
 ① Heisei 11th year (1999) ② Hōreki years (1751-1764) ③ (ji-mai, benevolence) ④ The bird of rice-straw and bamboo by townfolk



UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage:33 Yama, Hoko,Yatai, float festivals in Japan
Japan Heritage: Edo-era travelogue of four Hokuso cities, an excursion around Edo towns with traditional townscape filled with the nostalgic air of Edo.
Nationally-designated Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Property
Edo Masari 'Superior to Edo' Spirit
Sawara Grand Festival
 Sawara Grand Festivals are the general name given to the two festivals, the Yasaka-jinja (shrine) 'Gion' Festival held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday on the second or third weekend of July when Friday first falls on a two-digit day and the Suwa-jinja Autumn Festival held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday on the second weekend of October.
 Every massive festival float constructed of hard Japanese zelkova wood with a big figure on its roof-top and splendid carvings around it moves on through the historic buildings preservation area, accompanied by the bouncy tunes of Sawara Bayashi (festival music). More often than not, the people drawing and pushing the floats perform to the festival music graceful dancing called Te-ko-mai (originally, a festival dance of geisha in fireman clothes). Sawara Grand Festivals were nationally-designated as Important Intangible Folk-cultural Property in February 2004.
 The origin of the Sawara Festival is unknown because there are no documents left, but it might be that the festival of the present style originated at mid-Edo era. Around that time, Sawara Village began to enjoy its prosperity as the new fast and safe transport route by ship to Edo up and down the Tone River was developed. That financial power of Sawara made it possible to create luxurious culture of the festival, Sawara people being strongly conscious of Sannō-Festival and Kanda-Festival (Edo's typical grand festivals). People aimed to create their own style of festival superior to Edo.
 The tradition of over 300 years has still been handed down by the people of Sawara. Consequently, the 11th session of UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, held in Ethiopia on 30th November 2016 (1st December Japan Time), inscribed 33 Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan, including "Sawara Grand Festival," on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Nationally-designated Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Property
Sawara Bayashi (festival music), Japan's top three festival music.

At the middle level of each festival float, the band of the festival musicians plays Sawara-Bayashi festival music. The tunes of Sawara Bayashi are very unique in the genre of the Japanese festival music. They have their own specific melodies, sentimental and atmospheric, because most of the music pieces were composed by Kabuki and Bunraku composers in Edo.
 In Sawara, the festival music is called 'Ge-za (theater music)' and the band of musicians is called Ge-za-ren (music band). The instruments are bamboo flutes, thick drums, small drums, big drum, and handy metal disk. About 15 players usually play sitting inside and on the rails of the float, which performance is worthy of being called 'Orchestra'.
 More than 40 tunes are classified into 3 groups, 'Dan-mono' (dramatic tunes, composed in harmony with slow movement of the float), 'Ha-mono' (popular tunes, like folk songs, popular songs in each period and melodies with the fast tempo) and 'Yaku-mono' (supplementary and ritualistic melodies, played when the float begins to move). Every music is played in accordance to the atmosphere and conditions of the streets through which the float is moving.
 No other Japanese festival tunes have such specific sound of tunes and plenty of music numbers as Sawara Bayashi.

Main selection of Sawara Bayashi
 Dan-mono: azuma, sugomori, sarashi, kanda, yaoya, danshichi, sogu, tate, kuzushi
 Yaku-mono: san-giri, baka-bayashi, hana-sanbasō
 Ha-mono: oyakama, nekoja, yaguruma, sugomori-kuzushi, tsumima, yoshino, ken-bayashi, yamato, Sawara-ondo, Sawara-kouta, matsukazari, anba, ōsugi-anba, rappa-bushi, sendō-kouta, kushimoto-bushi, and others.