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## Ningyo: Destined for the Trash Can ?

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### Abstract

**Japanese Ningyo (dolls) are static art, individual sculptures and expressions of creativity. This paper explores the loss of these wonderful works of art. While western dolls fetch high prices and are highly sought after if even a few decades old, we explore the destination of most ningyo as they fail to be recognized or preserved. Particularly the dolls fashioned by women to decorate their homes, as their beauty fades they are set aside. What has happened to them? What is taking their place as globalization is changing the decorating desires of the Japanese?**

“Man has been making images of himself for so many millennia and in so many parts of the world that this habit has come to seem an instinctive part of human behavior” (Keene 1973: 9).

### Introduction

While living in Japan, the first author became intrigued with *ningyo* (dolls) and spent five years collecting them and their stories. Observations of changes in Japanese culture over the past fourteen years prompted the examination of ningyo from an anthropological viewpoint. Particularly intriguing is the pattern of an apparent negative shift in the continuation of cultural practices surrounding ningyo. A corresponding positive wave of interest mirrors this shift in other countries such as the United States. Writings in English that pertain to Ningyo are few and focus on puppets, identification and types, or the religious meanings attached to ningyo. In this paper, we introduce Ningyo, some

history of their makers and their uses. Then we explore the disappearance and changes Ningyo are undergoing within the context of globalization. Finally, we examine the future of Ningyo and suggest paths for preserving their appreciation.

### Research Methods

Six weeks of field study in Japan during the summer of 2000 provided follow-up comparisons for fourteen years of observations begun when the first author lived in Japan. Interviews with experts on ningyo from around the USA and in Italy were gathered. It was interesting to note that outside of the circle of people who are devoted to study in this area, to admit to focusing upon ningyo was to invite dismissal — as if the subject was less than worthy of scholarly attention. Jane Marie Law, author of several books including *Puppets of Nostalgia*, described a similar experience of studying ningyo in this way:

“Because in our own culture puppets have been relegated to the playroom... I cannot count the times I have had to defend the legitimate right of a historian of religions to take Japanese puppets seriously.” (Law 1997:19).

Despite the connections between ningyo and traditionally respected areas of cultural study within Japan, it is an unexpected idea that someone would want to study ningyo themselves. In America, our cultural lenses can keep us from recognizing dolls as an important element in Japanese culture.

### Ethnographic/Historical Background

“As a general category using the Chinese readings for the two characters ‘person’ and ‘shape’, the word ningyo appears in the Japanese language” and is translated as “human figure”(Funk 2000: 13).

The existence of ningyo extends back

to an earlier time than the word itself and many figure types have individual names. Therefore, ningyo is an overarching term that encompasses them all, just like the term “doll” encompasses everything from Raggedy Ann to Barbie. Ningyo vary widely from stone guardian Jizo figures and larger than life wooden carvings to nearly surrealistic figures formed from twisted straw, or ultra-realistic representations of clay. They cover a range from those created only for static display as three-dimensional art, to play things such as Ichimastu, jointed replicas of small children which were imitated by French and German toy makers (Ningyo). Ningyo have been made as luxury items for the samurai classes as well as inexpensive souvenirs. Ningyo have played many cultural roles from religious effigies to ordinary playthings. Identifying ningyo by age or type is an imperfect process, which includes understanding the many materials which Ningyo have been made from such as wood, straw, toso<sup>2</sup>, gofun<sup>3</sup>, sabi<sup>4</sup>, ceramics, wire, paper, plastic etc. Furthermore, knowledge of theater, dance, life, textiles, historical garb, folklore, seasonal patterns, and symbolism and other elements of consideration factor into identification.

“Many dolls are holding special objects or their clothes are decorated with special symbols. Therefore, a Japanese doll collector has another opportunity to learn more about a particular doll by researching the symbology used ([wysiwyg://195/http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/3808/ljapgen.html](http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/3808/ljapgen.html) 4/26/00).

“This is a 400-year-old pattern. Yet each Emperor Jima figure is highly individual so elements of the pattern are required in recognition of the type and other elements are important for recognizing the age of the figure, where and by whom it might have been created and what the economic level of the owner might have been. Generally dollmaking shows that the finer the doll, the more educated and respected the

maker” (Bailey, P. December 11, 2000).

“Those who know and understand the details of Japanese culture are able to look at a doll or the photograph of a woman in traditional dress and identify her age and status. It is true that kimono tell some of these things, too. But hairstyles of both male and female figures have very clearly defined meanings” (Kawata 1995: 13-16).

Not just kimono and hairstyles, but also headgear and accessories aid identifying ningyo. Of course over time some of the items which originally belonged with a ningyo may be lost or others substituted but it is important to study the different types and realize what should be there.

For a non-Japanese, even establishing the sex of a ningyo may be difficult. While some figures, particularly gosho ningyo (little boys), may have explicit genitals, others such as the Empress Jingu dressed in armor may appear male. Sorting out the puppets from Bunraku is much easier as they are dimorphic; male puppets are much larger and heavier than the female (Hironaga 1964).

For Japanese who are old enough to be familiar with many ningyo, identifying types is easy. However, discovering the true age of a figure is limited to those with special knowledge of materials and styles, and tracing the actual maker of a figure is likely an impossible task. For people outside the culture, identifying ningyo is more difficult due to a lack of innate understanding and learning materials. “It is very hard to find information materials, particularly in English ... and you really need all the information before true appreciation can be achieved-before the doll comes alive” (Bailey, P. December 11,2000). A few good books in English do provide information for identifying ningyo,<sup>5</sup> but some of these are out of print. We do not try to duplicate efforts in identifying the various types of ningyo for this study.

Prior to the Heian period (794-1185)

there is little known about ningyo, while records from the Heian period show ningyo to be mostly handmade talismans and fetishes. It is from the Edo period (1615-1868) that ningyo developed into a high art form. From the Edo to the Taisho (1912-1926) eras ningyo were not only handmade, but also made in male operated artisan houses (Yamada 1962) created them on a commercial basis. The artisan owner would hand down the business through his male heirs.

“The making of a ‘musha ningyo’ or warrior doll, whether mass-produced or custom ordered from the finest doll makers, involved at least five specialized craftsmen. The maker of the hands, feet and head; the wig maker; the clothes maker; the armor and accessory maker and the body dresser who finally puts the whole doll together. Their techniques and manufacturing secrets were handed down to the next generation and it was not rare to find 10<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> generation dollmakers” (Boy’s Day Doll by Vicky DeAngelis <http://www.jadejapan.com/boyday.1.htm> ).

People trained to do one part; they trained for years just to do that one part. An apprentice might train for six or seven years. Very few people did or do the whole figure” (Bailey, P. December 11, 2000).

These ningyo are considered to be professionally produced and thus accorded respect on one level as artisan made, and on another level respect is attached to the figure according to the particular artist. The difficulty lies in identifying the maker of a ningyo as they were rarely signed. One group Maruhei marked the tomobako (wooden boxes) of the ningyo, but these boxes were often lost (Pate, A. December 21,2000). Osaiku-ningyo or “the dolls made at home, sometimes by kits, are almost always made by women. These were then given as gifts or used for home decorations” (Bailey, P. December 11, 2000). Some antique woodblock prints

depict women applying textiles to ningyo. In the Taisho era (1912-1926) “a noteworthy feature... was the vogue for dollmaking at home” (Yamada 1962: 12). These ningyo and all other handmade dolls, though sometimes displayed in public forums such as department stores, are still considered “amateur” dolls worthy of less respect because of that status.

“Much as we are used to thinking of dolls and figures as inanimate objects, ...Ningyo are said to have a soul, but this is ascribed in different ways from...personality imbued by the craftsman, to the cutting open of the eyes to impart the soul (kaigen), to the inspiration of awe, or the forces of nature known in Shinto as Kami which a ningyo must possess in order to avert ills” (Funk 2000: 13-15).

Created to both serve religious functions and through using religious ideals, ningyo such as Haniwa “clay circle” figures were used in ancient times to show boundaries between the living and the dead. Later ningyo such as straw Wara or effigies like Senmori-sama were charged with sins and destroyed. Others served as vessels of spirits capable of warding off illness, or as surrogates such as the Amagatsu or Hoko for absorbing the same (Law 1997: 32-33) (Baten 2000: 13,37,95). In fact, the connection between the figures as representations of humans and their owners is a deep one, bordering on magic.

“Talking to the many Japanese I interviewed, I learned why so many people used to try to prevent me from receiving old dolls, especially if I didn’t know the former owners, as they [ningyo] could have had a negative influence on those receiving them. (dolls’ funeral).” (Fatuzzo, S. Jan. 29, 2001 by e-mail)

Beyond the religious aspects, Ningyo have ties to all forms of theater, as well as to storytelling and folk tales, history and

dance. Some figures have become set patterns from these connections like all Emperor Jima Dolls, or Fujima-sume (Wisteria maiden dancers).

Ningyo decorate homes, particularly during the holidays of Girl's Day and Boy's Day. These displays can be elaborate, while others are modest, yet nearly every household has had these ningyo. Sets are purchased for each successive generation to be displayed for a few days each year and stored the remainder so even very old sets can look nearly new and age must be calculated by clues other than wear.

### **Loss and Destruction**

Much of that written about ningyo is in old-style Japanese, making it very difficult for anyone but the most experienced scholars to read, let alone translate. Such scholars are few and tend to specialize in areas other than ningyo. This is a critical element in gathering any further information about ningyo as old scrolls and documents, such as diaries or account books, are decomposing before they can be read.

Many types of Ningyo have also disappeared or are becoming more rare for several reasons. One of which is simply deterioration, as they are extremely fragile constructions and are by nature impermanent. Even reverent collectors of ningyo rarely have the capacity to preserve them against the ravages of time and atmosphere. It is this very impermanence, however, that is a central feature of Ningyo. Many forms were created for the purpose of drawing off evil or illness in order for it to be destroyed. This idea of the impermanence of the material world (*mujo*) that is represented by ningyo is one of the central threads of Buddhist belief (Pate, A. December 21, 2000).

Ningyo that have been stored for many years are continually coming to light as they are inherited by younger Japanese whose style of living is very westernized. They are more frequently parting with these

figures because they have no connection with them. The practice of selling ningyo while virtually unheard of in the past has become more common. Unwanted ningyo leave the country as purchases by foreigners or antique dealers who come to gather them for overseas customers. American collectors relish the fact that they can purchase very old figures for a reasonable price.

Ningyo are rarely put into the trash due to the idea that it has attachments and therefore must be disposed of in an honorable way. Ningyo that are most likely to be casually disposed of are the handmade, or kit-type dolls assembled by ordinary people. These become faded, soiled, or moth eaten which makes them undesirable for decoration. Here in America, we might feel that a doll, perhaps a rag doll made by our mother or grandmother, is an emotional item worthy of preservation no matter how dilapidated it has become. In fact, we might display it proudly as a proclamation of connection with previous generations or as examples of admired handicraft. In Japan, the craft efforts of the individual are not prized in quite the same way. Untrained individuals have no recognizable expertise, and will themselves tend not to recognize or accept any credit for talent. Outside of a few exceptional masterpieces, Japanese do not respect items crafted by untrained people. Ningyo are likely to be treasured by museums, due to their connection with a particular artisan or family but works by unknown artists are saved only if they represent rare examples.

“Dolls by male makers are more likely to end up in museums and to hold value because they are from the traditional houses which are in turn inherited by men, rather than those ningyo made by women just for gift giving or decoration. When those fade, they are not kept (Bailey, P. December 11, 2000).

The main museums in Japan do not

actively seek to expand their collections of ningyo. Curators place ningyo at a lower priority than items in which they specialize. Thus, official preservation of ningyo is stagnating. Preservation in numbers and kinds of ningyo are found in a pair of “Dolls Temples” in Kyoto<sup>6</sup>, which amassed the personal ningyo’s of princesses who entered these temples as nuns long ago. These collections do not benefit from modern preservation methods except to be shut away for most of the year, and shielded from flash photography.

Historically, ningyo were disposed of in prescribed ways. Figures (*sute-bina*) whose purpose was to absorb illness were burned or floated away. “Others such as the puppets used in the *Sanbaoso* rites, were considered as *shinsei* (sacred) and were buried and a *Kuyo* service was performed for them” (Law 1997: 201). Any or all of the types of Ningyo, including very rare ones, extraordinarily expensive new ones, as well as those considered to be clutter were and are candidates for ritual destruction offered by some Buddhist temples. This is the honorable method of disposing of ningyo.

“Ningyo *kuyo* is still practiced at some Buddhist temples as a ceremony to liberate the souls of the dolls. In cremating venerable, broken, or abandoned dolls, the Buddhist priests are ultimately recognizing the value of the ningyo and elevating them to a human level by such awareness (Funk 2000: 15).

Similar purification rituals practiced at some Shinto Shrines, such as the *Awashima-jinja*, involves burning ningyo or floating masses of them away on boats. (This shrine also has a large storeroom of ningyo, but the collections of many other shrines have been lost to bombing, fire or other disasters.)

The natural impermanence of ningyo combined with the proscription for many of them to be ritually disposed of are “natural” causes for the decreasing numbers of older

ningyo in Japan. The combination of snubbing they receive from museums and attention from overseas collectors provides another source of disappearance.

### **Destruction by Globalization**

Some observers of globalization have suggested that the spread of global popular culture will lead to the obliteration of local cultures (Barber 1995). This is consistent with post-World War II modernization theorists who held that traditional values had to be abandoned in order for third-world societies to modernize (Lerner 1958, Weiner 1968). Other modernization theorists argue simply that economic development lead to cultural change (Bell 1973, Inglehart and Baker 2000, Marx 1867). In terms of local arts, the general sense is that globalization leads to the loss of traditional forms in favor of cheaper easier export and tourist forms. In terms of Japanese attitudes toward ningyo, this seems to mirror what is happening. Nevertheless, globalization is multidimensional and in the case of Japan involves cultural flow in (at least) two directions. This paper will examine the declining interest on the part of Japanese in ningyo and the rise of American interest in and collection of ningyo.

“In the course of the nineteenth century, Japan’s place in the world was redefined by the creation of a new, Western-dominated world order which subsumed and transformed the older, China-centered East Asian system. A recent study by Jan Aart Scholte points out that a key element in the creation of the global system has been the establishment of international “norms” or “regimes”: that is, globally accepted standardized forms of knowledge and behavior which provide the essential basis for international communication and interaction...informal regimes which are essentially matters of practice and convention” (Morris 1998: 162-163).

In our observation, the impact of Western style housing has notably affected the presence of Ningyo in the Japanese home in several ways. First, western style houses do not have a special place such as the Tokunoma (traditional sacred space) for displaying such figures. Secondly, the style of Western living does not invite the inclusion of Ningyo. Home decorating magazines, advertisements and other publications currently portray the Japanese adaptation of Western style which features little inclusion of traditional notes. Even craft books and kits overwhelmingly feature western-style dolls and decorations for homemakers to create. This portrayal of an informal regime is having a great effect as noted this past summer. Although Japanese style houses remain and some new ones include traditional rooms, the overwhelmingly popular choice for new or rebuilt homes is westernized. Additionally, many visits to private homes revealed a considerable shrinkage in the ratio of people who display traditional or older ningyo.

Yet, another informal regime, that has greatly influenced the proliferation of ningyo, has been the entrance of women in the work force. Although Robert Ballon in his studies of women and employment in Japan discovered many ways that women's lives affect their employment, we found that another dimension of this experience is that part-time employment balanced with family considerations has left women with little time to pursue traditional "feminine arts" such as creating ningyo. In equal measure, the reduction in homemaking time and the lack of children has made it less of a priority for some to follow tradition by displaying the doll sets for holidays such as Hina Matsuri (Girls Day) and Kodomo-no-hi (Children's Day formerly known as Boy's Day). In conversations with women of various ages, it was discovered that the younger housewives and women with jobs were far more likely to confirm a decline in following traditions. Among those who did say they had ningyo or would display ningyo the majority owned and displayed

only Girl's Day Hina sets for their daughters. It is interesting to note that seasonal displays of gorgeous Hina sets in department stores and special showings of historical sets by museum are events well attended by the public (Pate, A. December 21, 2000).

Western ideas have even influenced both of the main festivals that feature ningyo. For Hina displays in honor of Hina Matsuri or Girl's Day is the issue of placement:

"through Japanese history until almost the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the emperor sat to the right, representing the East.... After Japan opened to the West beginning in the Meiji era, customs were strongly influenced by the European model, where protocol placed the king to the left of his consort (Devore 1988: 9).

Following World War II, for Boy's Day, the western disapproval of the warrior ideal represented by this holiday lead to changing it to Children's Day. The decorations traditionally assigned to the holiday have moved steadily away from those of helmets and battle flags, or of fierce Musha (warrior) ningyo to milder displays featuring chubby child folklore heroes reflecting themes of cuteness rather than war-like intensity. The tradition of displaying ningyo on Children's Day is on a steady decline, for all of the above mentioned reasons as well as the decrease in numbers of children and the lessening of their interest in static displays in favor of electronic entertainment. Ironically, the decline in displaying the Musha ningyo that westerners did not approve of as warrior models for Japanese youth, is accompanied by a an increase in desire for these unique types by western collectors.

In the case of Bunraku puppet performances, although they are preserved and subsidized as an art there is a "loss of a wide public following". Upon exposure to western style, Japanese entertainment perfected the art of animation, which in turn as made traditional entertainment such

as puppet theater seem boring to younger Japanese. “Not only do the words fail to capture the full attention of most spectators, but Bunraku usually seems extremely slow to people accustomed to the helter-skelter pace of motion pictures” (Keene 1973: 34-35).

As far back as the 1950’s it was noted that Bunraku was crippled as an entertainment vehicle in spite of preservation efforts:

“Every year the size of their audiences dwindled because the Bunraku enthusiasts, mostly advanced in age, decreased due to death, while younger people had too many other claims on their attention. ...However, spoiled by the abundance of much easier means of amusement, many young people today are too lazy to reach for the precious cultural legacy of their ancestors”(Hironga 1964: 35).

Time brings change, and the book Dreamland Japan suggests that manga (comics) is the modern Japanese equivalent to Bunraku and similar dramas of the past (Schodt 1998: 72).

Yet, another influence of global norms has been upon the size of families. The pressure of this norm has resulted in dramatically reduced numbers of children leaving an aging Japanese society. Now not only is there less desire for following traditional paths, and less reason to use ningyo, but there are also literally not enough people to replace artisans and craftsmen.

Many personal interviews with friends revealed sadness at the decline of artisanship and were summed up by author and collector Mr. Kita, who said “with much regret I confess the youth have no interest in the making of handicraft or Ningyo. This kind of work needs a patient mind to learn it and stay with it, today they do not have this kind of dedication” (Kita, July 9, 2000).

Westernization of dollmaking brought modern production methods and factories where crafting ningyo has switched to

assembly by female workers. Still doll artists remain, including at least five living national treasures. Some of these artists pursue new and creative types and materials rather than traditional forms and methods, few indeed are those who are available to train new artisans. Nowadays, the majority of ningyo are commercialized products, beautiful to look at but with an overall loss of individualism.<sup>8</sup>

“Even tourist dolls are just not the art work that they used to be, they can be all one type with a couple of different type heads for example they aren’t as individual as they used to be (Bailey, P. December 11, 2000).

Mr. Yoshimi Itoh, Chairman of Hakata Doll Manufacturer’s Cooperative Association in an interview on the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hakata ningyo making gave some insight into the effects of globalization on the creation and marketing of Hakata patterns.

“The Hakata doll is attractive to foreign people as well as Japanese people. So we have to take the demands or needs from foreign people, there are many foreign people who think of Japan just as an area located in Asia, and who think that Japan has the same culture as China’s. Such people seem to like the fisherman or the farmer as a motif for our dolls. Young Hakata manufacturers will need to stick to our traditional heartfelt craftsmanship and at the same time pay attention to international needs when they make Hakata dolls” (Itoh 2000: 11).

The need to satisfy tastes of the international market is one reason underlying the visible changes in Hakata.

The westernization of domestic tastes is another.

“Great differences have emerged over time in the style of Hakata creations. Of course, many Japanese figures created in a modern manner often have faces which seem to



resemble those of anime characters... Most likely, these figures appeal to those [Japanese] who grew up during the past couple of decades and are conditioned by anime movies and characters such as Takara Barbie and Hello Kitty” (Itoh 2000: 13- 15).

Other ningyo have also changed in form or materials. For example, Daruma ningyo were mostly wooden figures, but now there are many types. The most common type is harinuko-ningyo, a vacuum-molded paper doll sold en masse at temples for festivals and holidays. Daruma have become so common place that even the large temple images of Daruma are not noted as objets d’art. “...only two have been designated as Important Cultural Properties, one of which was carved in 1430. (McFarland 1987: 44, 99-101). Despite the increased popularity of Daruma their role in Japanese culture has changed dramatically.

“Until recently a Daruma tumbler doll traditionally had been one of the first toys given to a Japanese child. Now perhaps a Mickey Mouse or a Snoopy Doll, or anyone of dozens of other attractive options, is a likely choice... More subtly, a Daruma toy contributed to a child’s acculturation as a Japanese. At one level, so it is said, the growing sense of masculinity among little boys was fed by the toy’s yielding to their domination. At a more benign level, for all children it made the legendary Daruma a real and congenial companion, never to be forgotten even in adult life... As a symbol of socially favored virtues, the okigari<sup>9</sup> is associated with a well-known proverb: nana korobi yo oki” (‘seven falls, eight rises’ a symbol of perseverance and resilience) (McFarland 1987:60-61).

Western ideas of sensitivity combined with the increased popularity of eyeless Daruma sold for the fulfillment of wishes has created a new conflict as well and is, “being challenged by groups of blind and visually impaired Japanese. To equate success or personal wholeness with two open eyes, they assert, is a derogation of

those who can never attain that status but who nevertheless may lead successful and productive lives. In some instances, organized protests have resulted in local curtailments in the dispensing of eyeless Daruma images, but nationwide these protests seem to have made little impact. Yet the issue is significant, not only in its own specific terms, but also as an example of a universal modern dilemma—the clash between traditional customs and newly awakened sensitivities... (McFarland 1987:64).

Even though older ningyo are steadily disappearing, Japan remains the world’s second largest producer of dolls just behind the United States (Dalby 1984: 25). The new ningyo are changing forms to satisfy a foreign market or becoming mass produced. The cultural roles of ningyo are also changing with the times, with less emphasis on religion and more upon decoration. There is simultaneously more freedom of creativity for the individual artist, and less individualism in the masses of ningyo produced. Some traditional forms are being supplanted by popular blonde fashion dolls, power rangers, while surviving traditional forms may resemble the old but sport new materials such as styrofoam bodies and identical plastic faces.

## Preservation

Some ningyo have experienced preservation efforts the best documented was the revival of the Awaji puppet theaters. (Scott & Law) Umazume, the director of the new puppet theater in Fukura [as of 1997] described why he went to such effort to revive Awaji theater: “At that time, I had a terrible sense of loss... It was painful to feel something so meaningful sliding through your fingers and yet do nothing but talk about the good old days” (Scott 1963 17-18).

“Every thing about this revival indicates that the damage of time has been undone.

...The Japanese terms most often used to denote this process are fukkatsu (\*revival, even resurrection) fukko (restoration), and saikai (reopening). Regardless of the term used (and most people use them interchangeably), inherent in this process is an orientation toward the past as a time of value and meaning” (McFarland 1987: 99).

The important element in revival of an art is the attitude of the younger people, the desire to encourage its continuation. (Scott 1963 17-18).

A relatively small percentage of older Ningyo have found limited attention through preservation and less through display in museums scattered throughout the world. It is estimated that a larger number are housed in private collections mostly outside of Japan. It is this corresponding wave of interest outside of Japan that keeps moving older ningyo into foreign hands. Collectors and the types of ningyo they gather vary from Michael Arvarieas who became famous for purchasing and showing the finest ningyo, to anonymous people who end up salvaging amateur dolls. Themes common to them all are the appreciation of ningyo as individually unique art works and the idea of preservation. Japanese collectors of ningyo though rarer, seem to have the same concerns.

In 1993 J.A.D.E.<sup>10</sup> (Japanese American Doll Enthusiasts), the only organization for the collectors of oriental dolls was formed emphasis on providing English information about ningyo through a journal, a website and is now the largest international forum for bringing collectors of ningyo together. JADE members are involved in the rediscovery, restoration and reunification of the Torei-ningyo or Friendship Dolls which were part of an exchange project between Japanese and American children in the 1920's that literally involved millions of people but was forgotten about in the bitter aftermath of war.

We have explored how traditional ningyo have fallen out of favor in Japan, but they also face discrimination in the west. Those who are interested in Japanese

ningyo do not collect them as an investment, since they do not have strong value in the doll market. Partly this is attributable to how people tend to lump all figures from all eastern cultures together, or ignorance of ningyo history and types calling them all “geisha dolls”. Another part of it is due to lingering prejudices against the foreign figures for their strangeness or the post war idea that anything Japanese was “cheap” or poorly made. Another factor which devalues ningyo on the international market stems from the difficulty in tracing the maker, western collectors are used to identifying where a figure was created or by whom so a lack of this information delegitimizes ningyo.

We would like to offer some observations and suggestions for the preservation of ningyo. “First and foremost, folk performing arts must be needed and respected by local communities in order to survive. Yet it is equally clear that had the central government not stepped in to rescue them, many would have died out”

(Thornbury 1997: 548) In order to generate community interest in ningyo preservation and creation Japan might increase the fledgling volunteer system to include allowing older people to come to schools using this as a vehicle for transmitting respect and knowledge of traditions and craftsmanship to the next generations. Traditional museums could use the successful efforts of the Yokohama Doll's House, which partnered with a community pottery club to revive the nearly extinct art of Yokohma Kaiko-ningyo, as a model for similar programs to encourage the learning of arts involved in ningyo making.

Government or concerned community groups could fund education for scholars in the arts of preservation, curatorship, and in the ability to read historical documents. Likewise, greater efforts could be made to help temples and shrines to safely preserve known collections that are now merely housed. In America and other foreign countries pressure could be brought to bear on our museums to accept ningyo as object

worthy of display, rather than being tucked away thus encouraging the education of the visiting public. Overall, in the face of global homogenization of cultural ideals, we all need to work on retaining artifacts like ningyo so we don't lose sight of the unique contributions of different peoples.

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#### Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Toso-used for composition based dolls, past made of Paulownia sawdust mixed with glue. The finer the sawdust the better the grade of toso.

<sup>2</sup> Gofun- a thick paint made with glue and ground seashells

<sup>3</sup> Sabi- a white paint made from whetstone powder, water and lacquer

<sup>4</sup> Japanese Dolls by Tokubei Yamada Japan Travel Bureau Tokyo 1962  
 Japanese Antique Dolls by Jill and David Gribbon New York and Tokyo Wheatherhill 1984.

The Image and the Motif Japanese Dolls by Lea Baten Tokyo, Shufuntomo Co. Ltd. 1988.

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<sup>5</sup> Hokyo-Ji Temple and Reigan-ji Temple

<sup>6</sup> Kuyo- Buddhist ceremony of appeasement

<sup>7</sup> " There are a lot of modern artists who dedicate their art even to ideate new dolls, inventing new techniques and shapes. I have found the following names: (some are National Living Treasurers among the others): Hori Ryyuujou, Kagoshima Juzou, Noguchi Sonoo, Ichihashi Toshiko, Hirata Gouyou, Yumeji, Tsujimura, Juzaburou, Yotsuya Shimon, Akiyama Nobuko, Kubo Hanae, Nakanishi Kyouko, Noguchi Mitsuhiko, Kosugi Kozou, Kawasaki Puppet. But of course this is not the complete list of doll masters" (Fatuzo, S. Jan. 29, 2001). Hirano Masamishi uses the oldest techniques of hand carved...

...ningyo which are posted at [wysiwyg://195/http://www.geocities.com/Hearthland/3808/ljapgen.html](http://www.geocities.com/Hearthland/3808/ljapgen.html)

<sup>8</sup> okigari-self righting figure

<sup>9</sup> Current membership approximately 300

<sup>10</sup> Cf. F. Schleiermacher and H.-H. Kögler's introduction to Empathy and Agency, Boulder: Westview Press, 2000.

<sup>11</sup> I'm thinking here of what J.-F. Lyotard means when he speaks of 'metanarratives' and the like as "those that have marked modernity: the progressive emancipation of reason and freedom, the progressive or catastrophic emancipation of labor (source of alienated value in capitalism), the enrichment of all humanity through the progress of capitalist technoscience, and even — if we include Christianity itself in modernity (in opposition to the classicism of antiquity) — the salvation of creatures through the conversion of souls to the Christian narrative of martyred love. Hegel's philosophy totalizes all of these

narratives and, in a sense, is itself a distillation of speculative modernity.” (18) The Postmodern Exp.: correspondence 1982-1985, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1992.

<sup>12</sup> Ernst Cassirer unwittingly characterizes this in Volume 3 of his Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: “Since [Husserlian] phenomenology as such remains within the sphere of meaning and intentionality, can it even attempt to designate that which is alien to meaning?” (199)

<sup>13</sup> In Ideas §85, Husserl explains “intentional experiences are there as unities through the bestowal of meaning ... sensory data offer themselves as material for intentional informings ...”

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Husserl’s Cartesian Meditations §44 — my understanding of Husserl’s project is in part due to a close reading of the fifth meditation.

<sup>15</sup> In the course of the Vienna Lecture, Husserl speaks of the “West’s mission for humanity” (14). We see now in this blunt simplification the *real* message of his mission — in his own words — that is, the drive behind his desire to found knowledge in the self. The epoche falls in line with the positive sciences (the line of thought that it supposedly corrects) in the on-going mission of Western man to project self-understanding onto the Other — and in the process loose recourse to humanity as a whole. In transcendental phenomenology, Husserl desires to have the “ego ... as the performer ... [and] purely theoretical spectator ... [of] an absolutely self-sufficient science of the spirit in the form of consistently coming to terms with oneself and with the *world as spiritual accomplishment*” (13). We shall better grasp the shortcomings of this conception of understanding and consciousness when we turn in the conclusion of this essay to the hermeneutic ideas developed by Gadamer (following Heidegger).

<sup>16</sup> A representative critic of Dennett in the Anglo-American tradition is Thomas Nagel.

Consider, for example, his persuasively argued essay The View From Nowhere, wherein, he argues, in summary: “the sources of philosophy are preverbal and often precultural, and one of its most difficult tasks is to express unformed but intuitively felt problems in language without losing them.” (11).

<sup>17</sup> “Whereas Phenomenologists propose that one can get to one’s *own* notional world by some special somewhat introspectionist bit of mental gymnastics — called, by some, the phenomenological reduction — we are concerned with determining the notional world of *another*, from the outside. The tradition of Brentano and Husserl is *auto-phenomenology*; I am proposing *hetero-phenomenology*.” (Stance 153)

<sup>18</sup> In Ideas §80, we read “the experiencing Ego is still nothing that might be taken for itself and made into an object of inquiry on its own account. Apart from its ‘ways of being related’ or ‘ways of behaving’ it is completely empty of essential components, it has no content that could be unraveled, it is in and for itself indescribable: pure Ego and nothing further.”

<sup>19</sup> “One starts with the ideal of perfect rationality and revises downward as circumstances dictate. That is, one starts with the assumption that people believe all the implications of their beliefs and believe no contradictory pairs of belief.” (Stance 21)

<sup>20</sup> “We establish in ourselves just one particular habitual direction of interest, with a certain vocational attitude, to which there belongs a particular “vocational time” (*Berufszeit*) ... when we actualize one of our habitual interests and are thus involved in our vocational activities (in the accomplishment of our work), we assume a posture of epoche toward our other life-interests, even though these still exist and are still ours.” (Crisis §35)

<sup>21</sup> “On this view one can even acknowledge the interest relativity of belief

attributions and grant that given the different interests of different cultures, for instance, the beliefs and desires one culture would attribute to a member might be quite different from the beliefs and desires another culture would attribute to that very same person. But supposing that were so in a particular case, there would be the further facts about how well each of the rival intentional strategies worked for predicting the behavior of that person. We can be sure in advance that no intentional interpretation of an individual will work to perfection, and it may be that two rival schemes are about equally good, and better than any others we can devise. That this is the case is itself something about which there can be a fact of the matter. The objective presence of one pattern (with whatever imperfections) does not rule out the objective presence of another pattern (with whatever imperfections).” (Stance 29)

<sup>22</sup> Gadamer in TM: “We must ask whether ... the genuine content of the concept of life does not become alienated when it is articulated in terms of the epistemological schema: deriving it from the ultimate data of consciousness.” (250)

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Gadamer in TM: “Though it is supposed to bracket all the validity of the world and all the pregiveness of anything else, transcendental reflection must regard itself too as included in the life-world.” (248)

<sup>24</sup> Heidegger is quite explicit about this impossibility: “In its manner of existing at any given time, and accordingly also with the understanding of being that belongs to it, Dasein grows into a customary interpretation of itself and grows up in that interpretation ... This understanding discloses the possibilities of its being ... Its own past ... does not *follow after* Dasein but rather always already goes ahead of it” (BT 2 17-18).

<sup>25</sup> Gadamer emphasizes the role of prejudice in understanding. In TM he summarizes its role in his discussion of the

hermeneutic circle: “The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. *That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being*” (276-277).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Jean Grondin’s excellent discussion of protestant (Luther and Flacius), romantic (Schleiermacher), and historical (Dilthey) hermeneutics in Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics, Yale: New Haven, 1994., and my essay “Misunderstanding and Empathic Transposition in the Hermeneutics of Friedrich Schleiermacher”, 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. J. Derrida’s essay “Différance” in Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern, 1973, and Part 1, §2 “Linguistics and Grammatology” in Of Grammatology, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 1997.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Allan Megill’s Prophets of extremity, Univ. of Cal. Press, 1985. He argues that thinkers like Heidegger and Gadamer are “trying to encourage our capacity for *ekstasis* — that imaginative ability that we possess to transcend our own situations, to get outside ourselves in time and space ... it is precisely the capacity for *ekstasis* that enables us to function as moral beings...” (341 — underscore mine).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Richard Rorty Part 1, §1 “The contingency of language” in Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, Cambridge: Cambridge, 1989, and Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, Princeton: Princeton, 1979. For a critique of theoretical holism and a discussion of the distinction between the physical and human sciences, see Kögler’s essay “Objectification and Dialogue” in Existentialia, An International Journal of Philosophy. Vol. XI, 2001, pp. 387-405.

In his essay “Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter”, Jürgen Habermas writes of

Rorty's liberal ironist utopia: "[Rorty's vision] combines the inconspicuously subversive force of leisure with an elitist notion of creative linguistic imagination and with the wisdom of the ages ... for even philosophy that has been taught its limits by pragmatism and hermeneuticism will not be able to find a resting place in

edifying conversation outside the sciences without immediately being drawn back into argumentation, that is, justificatory discourse" (247).

<sup>30</sup> Kögler's critical evaluation of Dreyfus' conclusions can be found in the essay "The Background of Interpretation," in International Zeitschrift für Philosophie, No. 2, 1994 pp. 305-325.