Festival Decoration
—Origin and Spread of Hitotsumono—

FUKUHARA Toshio

In some festivals, a child or doll called "Hitotsumono" passes in the procession. In folklore, this has been conventionally interpreted as Yorimashi or Yorishiro (an image into which the divine spirit enters). As against this, this paper reviews the Hitotsumono by investigating examples mainly in the Kinki and Kyushu Districts. The Hitotsumono came into being in the late Heian Period in the festivals of the Kinai Region, when a horse driver (a child) was brought into the framework of then typical festival entertainments, such as Dengaku (ritual music and dancing performed in Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples), Ō-no-mai (King's Dance), Shishimai (ritual lion dance), Seinoo (Court dance performed at the Kasuga shrine), Mikokagura (shrine maidens' music and dancing), Sumo (wrestling), Kurabeuma (horse racing), and Yabusame (horseback archery). The Hitotsumono appeared in the festivals of shrines at Uji, Kasuga, Gion, Inari, Imamiya, and Hie. The Hitotsumono spread from these festivals in the Kinai Region in the early Middle Ages, to various parts of the country, as one of the entertainments for divine service connected with the Tendai-sect and Hie-Shrine, or as one of the entertainments for divine service connected with the Hachiman-Shrine Hōjōe (Buddhist ceremony in which captured animals and fish are released to fields, mountains, ponds or marshes). Many of the Hitotsumono, which became established in various areas, disappeared when the framework of the festivals of the Middle Ages and the Miyaza (local organizations for festivals) were dissolved, or changed in quality. The Hitotsumono was, originally, performed also by young people and adults, and its existence depended on unexpectedness and eye-catching ideas. However, in the repetition of the same acts in festivals, the Hitotsumono became stereotyped with no special art, and most of them lost popularity and disappeared. Only Hitotsumono which brought a child or a doll into the performance remained in existence. The Hitotsumono was originally a medium, so its participation in a parade had no religious meaning. In the Modern Age, folklorists came to consider it as an image into which the divine spirit enters. The interpretation of the essence of the Hitotsumono shifted from that of its original secular existence (a type of performance in the parade) to a sacred one (an image into which the divine spirit enters); the latter is the commonly accepted opinion at the present. The Hitotsumono already existed in festivals in the Heian Period, together with Mikoshi (portable shrines). From the theological viewpoint, the question is why a god should have to rest on a separate image, though the god passes to Otabisho (the resting place) by a portable shrine? "Hitotsu" of the Hitotsumono is not a cardinal number, but an ordinal number. It seems to have two meanings; the Hitotsumono passes by first, and it is the most conspicuous. The essence of the Hitotsumono is the elegance of the procession, the divine presence, the divine visit, or passage, or parade.