

Ueno Tenjin Festival: Shinmachi

Shirushi: Hakurakuten

Danjiri: Naginata Boko

The *danjiri* float of Shinmachi is known as Naginata Boko, a name derived from the Japanese polearm (*naginata*) coming out of the float's roof. Based on an ink inscription on a side banner, Naginata Boko was built around 1783, but in 2016 the side banner was replaced with a replica. The front curtain depicts a scene from the life of Zhang Liang (251–186 BCE), a hero of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), in which he returns lost shoes to the legendary sage, Huang Shigong.

The main curtains contain two parallel illustrations. On the left side, a Japanese bush warbler flies among pine trees, bamboo, and plum trees; on the right, the same plants are depicted with a sparrow in flight. The pine tree, bamboo and the plum tree form a special motif in East-Asian art known in Japanese as *shō-chiku-bai*. All three remain hardy during the winter, and together they symbolize resilience in the face of difficulty.

The main part of the *shirushi* float of Shinmachi is a statue of Haku Rakuten (772–846; also known as Bai Juyi or Letian), resting in a hut surrounded by pine branches. An influential Chinese poet and governor during the Tang dynasty (618–907), Haku Rakuten was known for his simple, accessible writing. The pine branches symbolize spirituality and strength.