

## **Ueno Tenjin Festival: Nishimachi**

***Shirushi:*** Kakko

***Danjiri:*** Kakan

The design of the Kakko *shirushi* float of Nishimachi refers to an ancient Chinese folktale. Whenever the people were unhappy with their ruler, they would protest by beating a *kakko* drum. When they were happy with their ruler and the country was at peace, a splendid rooster would come and sit on the drum. In this way, a rooster on a drum became a symbol of peace. The drum is surrounded by rich fabrics and decorations representing the happiness of Nishimachi's residents during the *shirushi*'s creation in 1863.

The name of the *danjiri*, Kakan, means "garland," which comes from a part of the costume that is worn by performing dancers. The top curtain of the *danjiri* shows a multitude of legendary beasts, or *reiju*, surrounded by stylized grasses. The middle curtain is an embroidered reproduction of a Jin dynasty (266–420) painting, *Rantei kyokusui no en*, which depicts noblemen at a banquet next to a winding stream.

The front of the *danjiri* is meant to resemble a palace, with bejeweled railings and handmade metal fittings. These glittering decorations surround a halfway-lowered screen, or *sudare*. Since screens were often used to prevent commoners from looking directly at nobility, this lends a sense of prestige to the people riding on the float.