

## **World Kite Museum**

### **The Distinctive Features of Higashiomi Oodako**

On average, it takes around 600 people to make a single giant kite (*oodako*). Barring setbacks, the process takes about one month. Completed kites are about 13 meters long and 12 meters wide, with some weighing as much as 700 kilograms. The kites require around 360 sheets of paper, 50 bamboo poles, and about 20 liters of glue.

Higashiomi residents are proud of the *oodako* they design, build, and fly. The work of building each kite helps to create lasting friendships and to unite communities. Construction methods are passed down from generation to generation, and the kites have three defining features.

### ***Hanjimon***

A *hanjimon* (judging character) is a unique puzzle or word play that was popular during the eighteenth century. In Higashiomi, the Higashiomi

Oodako Preservation Society decides the *hanjimon* to be placed in each kite's artwork. The character consists of a sketch of an animal and one Japanese kanji, and usually reflects the social mood or celebrations of the year. It is revealed during a ceremony on the first day of the kite's construction.

### *Kirinuki*

To reduce wind resistance, the kite makers use a technique called *kirinuki* (lit. cutout). During construction, holes are cut strategically in parts of the washi paper to enhance the kite's aerodynamic balance without adversely affecting the artwork. This method ensures the kite is stable and can fly effectively.

### *Nagamaki*

The technique called *nagamaki* (lit., long wrapping) allows the kite to be easily carried, transported, and stored. Typical kite frames are made by crossing bamboo poles in a horizontal and vertical lattice, but Higashiomi

*oodako* are made so that the vertical bamboo poles can be removed easily, allowing the kite to be rolled up like a carpet. It normally takes about twenty people to transport the rolled-up kite to a truck by laying it on a bamboo ladder.