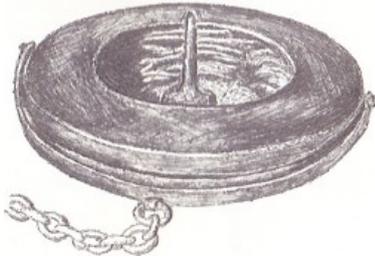


The Edo Mingu Times

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The essay was originally written in Japanese with illustrations by Tatsuo Akisawa, the director of the antique museum "Edo Mingu Kaido", which was translated to English by his son, Masaru Akisawa

Odawara-chochin (Foldable Paper Lantern)- Part III



Drawing 6: Odawara-chochin

Width 9.5cm, height 25cm,
1.5cm in thickness when folded
The early Meiji Period



Drawing 7: Bamboo Made Candle Holder

Diameter 3cm, length 18.3cm
With a bag made of cotton

Drawing No. 6 is believed to be the most sophisticated Odawara chochin, which was found in Fujisawa, one of the post towns known with Hiroshige's woodblock prints "the 53 post stations of the Tokaido road". The people who are saying it are these specialized in antique business, collectors and persons of taste who enjoy appearance and touch of historical tools.

As the top and bottom frames are made of brass, I estimate it was made in the Meiji Period. It comes with a bamboo made candle holder tied up to a Shingen-bukuro cotton bag with a pattern dyed with Edo tea. The Odawara-chochin stored in the bag is very compact, 9.5cm in width and 1.5cm in thickness when folded that could fit in a palm. The top frame has a flexible handle, both ends of which are attached on the side allowing it to lie down by fitting to the outer surface of the frame to achieve a minimum thickness when folded. Further more, a needle to hold a candle can be tilted over to avoid any protrusion so that the bottom frame can completely fit inside the top frame when collapsed. It is the same mechanical work utilized in a wooden trunk used in the Edo Period in which a stopper prevents a detachable carrying bar from getting loosened.

Various mechanisms are applied to this tiny object. Even though, I am a little reluctant to say if this is an improvement from the original ones made of Japanese cedar wood. When I held it from time to time, I felt as if I heard a voice of my father about the encouraging words for travelers in times past: "Odawara-chochin utilizes holy Japanese cedar trees from Doryoson Saijo-ji temple and the forests of Hakone should be just like their home. It should keep evil spirits away. It is like a Holy Spirit living in the fireplace. Burning light to carry around is very convenient. Evil spirits can never get close to it". The story was succeeded from my grand father to my father, born in 1892, which was expressed in his own style.

I presume it was people's fear against the nature and appreciations to fire (light) that made the word "Odawara-choine" popularly used covering "Futokoro-chochin", "Tamoto-chochin" and "Hako (box) -chochin", no matter what material they used.

(To be continued to Part IV)