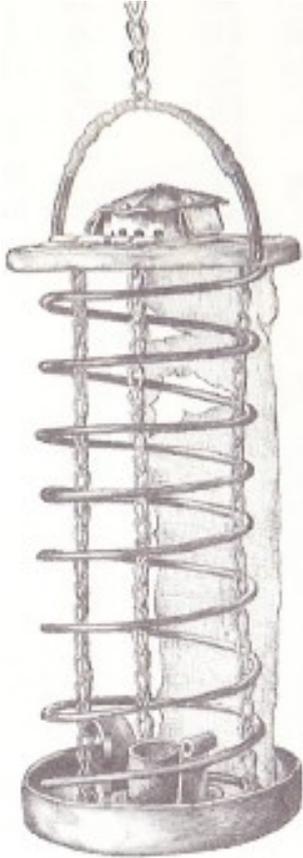


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The essay was originally written in Japanese with illustrations by Tatsuo Akisawa, the director of the antique museum "Edo Mingu Kaido", which was translated to English by his son, Masaru Akisawa

Odawara-chochin (Foldable Paper Lantern)- Part IV



Drawing 8: Odawara-chochin with spring

Width 14cm, height 30cm, 4.5cm in thickness when folded. The top part with holes for air circulation with a cover for rain proof is collapsible when the spring is off-hook. At the end of Meiji Period to early Taisho Period

In the Meiji and Taisho Periods, people's life styles changed, so is Odawara-chochin comparing to the Edo Period. Not just for its compactness and convenience to carry around, further improvements in usability and cost efficiency were made as people's living standard and economy progressed. There are some of Odawara-chochin that had served important roles in people's daily life. Drawing 8 is Odawara-chochin whose top and bottom frames are made of metal with a spring expanding them vertically while three chains limiting expansion at a certain height. Odawara-chochin that was designed to be hand held when lighted up could be placed on a shelf without being collapsed due to its solidarity created by the tension of the spring. It should have been convenient for maintenance and oiling works at warehouses, weaving factories and water mills for its compactness. Remaining cloth used for cover is well stained with oil.

There are other Odawara-chochin made of galvanized iron plate punched out and formed by a press for mass-production, some of which come with candle holders having unique appearance that lead us to think of Odawara-chochin having kept increased in demand and flourished even in these periods when Japan had already westernized.

There is a chochin beautifully made of Japanese cedar wood with the word "Nigata-ken" written with black India ink on its paper cover. Nigata-ken (Nigata Prefecture) has been well known for the production of Japanese cedar trees and the wood utilized is in superior quality. In spite of its weight so light giving somewhat a fragile feeling, the structure is well built with an appearance of distinctive quality which can be called a masterpiece. When I watch its top frame slightly sooted but still shining black, I get a feeling as if I were looking at an actual souvenir Odawara-chochin produced in the early times (as mentioned in the part I) when people believed in that it kept evil sprits away, although I have never seen such. (It is 12cm in diameter, 28cm in height and 4.5cm in thickness when folded, created in the Taisho to Showa Periods. Unfortunately I did not have a chance to draw an illustration of it but you can observe it at my private antique museum.) The lamps that flourished and popularly used as handy lights gradually decreased in usage and in number; in these days, the most of Odawara-chochin that I encountered were either damaged or fragmented, not intact in appearance.

(This is the end of the episodes about Odawara-chochin.)