Chapter 7

The Development of the Doll Festival as Seen in Paintings: Focusing on Edo Period Family Actions*

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7.1 Introduction

Since antiquity Japan has marked the seasonal change days designated as sechinichi 節日 (seasonal day) amidst each year’s seasonal range. On those days offerings were made to the gods, and special rites carried out to banish impurities and pray for peace. Which days were considered sechinichi changed with the different periods. However, in particular, dates that were odd-numbered in odd-numbered months, such as the 1st day of the 1st month, the 3rd day of the 3rd month, the 5th day of the 5th month, the 7th day of the 7th month and the 9th day of the 9th month came to be recognized as major sechinichi dates. In the midst of this development process, the term sekku 節供 (seasonal offering), which was originally used to refer to offerings to the gods, also came to mean sechinichi days themselves. In addition, sekku 節句, with a different, but homonymous, second character, became common by the Edo period. Then, the five sechinichi days noted above came to be known in general as the go-sekku, or five seasonal days, and they came to be the main festival days of the shogunal government. In this chapter, the term sekku refers to these two meanings: sekku (seasonal offering) and sechinichi (seasonal day).

Each sekku festival day was based on the original Chinese rites associated with the day, and traditional Japanese customs grew up around it. A set of specific rites were carried out on each day, including particular theatrical performances or involving decorations, foods, etc. The sekku rites became a part of the array of traditional practices known as nenjū gyōji annual rites, which were customarily carried out at specific times throughout the year. The nenjū gyōji rites were one of the traditional painting themes in Japan and they are closely linked to paintings. The nenjū gyōji were carried out season by season each year, but over the course of time, we can see periods of the rise and fall of these annual rites. Along with the cultural and social changes that occur over time, the rites also went through changes. In this regard, one of the main

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characteristics of the Edo period was the rise of rites celebrated by families for their children. The 3rd day of the 3rd month, the First Snake Day in the traditional calendar, came to be widely celebrated from the Edo period onwards as Hinamatsuri or Doll Festival, which is one example of family-based festivals for children. The rise of family festivals indicates the change of the family system. Based on this point of view, this chapter analyzes several paintings which depict the Doll Festival (Hinamatsuri) and Doll Festival dolls (hina-ningyō). Through this analysis, it will be clear which character the Doll Festival had in original and how it develops throughout the Edo period. While the bloom of family consumption spurs the development of the Doll Festival, the change of the festival as well as of the family system offers new themes to the Edo paintings.

7.2 Changes in the First Snake Day Rites

First, this section will confirm what kind of characteristics can be seen in the setting for the Doll Festival and the people who held Doll Festivals, through a comparison of two important rites carried out also on the 3rd day of the 3rd month, namely the banquet at the winding stream (kyokusui-no-en) and cock-fights (tori awase). Early records of special rites held on the 3rd day of the 3rd month include the “banquet at a winding stream” in which poets float their wine cups in a flowing stream and write poetry. The winding stream banquet was of course Chinese in origin. In ancient China, it was the custom to hold a purification ritual on the first snake day in the 3rd month at a river setting. The First Snake Day actually fell on a different day every year, but from around the Wei dynasty of the Three Kingdoms era onwards, the rituals were carried out on the 3rd day of the 3rd month. This waterside purification ritual changed around the Six Dynasties period onward into an elegant banquet where participants floated their cups down the flowing stream, and this custom was also handed down in Japan as a traditional feature. The first record of the winding stream banquet appears in the entry for the First Snake Day of the 3rd month of the first year of Emperor Kenzō’s reign (485) in the Nihon Shoki, and states that the emperor held a winding stream banquet in the imperial garden. The number of records of such banquets particularly increases in the 8th century. For example, the Shoku Nihongi records that “On the 3rd day of the 3rd month [in 728, Jinki 5 during Emperor Shōmu’s reign], the emperor held a banquet at the imperial pond with officials above the fifth rank, and gave them rewards.