Folk Customs of Makunouchi in Aizu-wakamatsu City

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Makunouchi is an agricultural village in the suburbs of Aizu-Wakamatsu, the castle town of the Lord of Aizu. Therefore, the daily life of the village has been closely related with the town. Vegetable cultivation was extensively carried on in the village, which was once called the kitchen garden of the castle town, and even today, vegetables are its principal products.

Formerly, people used to go every morning to the town and sell their vegetables in baskets. After the Meiji Revolution, people acquired lands previously owned by the town, and started rice cultivation. Today, these lands have been turned into residential areas, and some farmers of Makunouchi manage apartment houses, showing not themselves to be only producers but also enterprisers. It can be said that, at all times, the people of Makunouchi village have been closely concerned with the outer world. They have been sensitive to the movements of society, endowed with an enterprising spirit, and highly interested in learning. It was on this basis that “Aizu Nosho” (Book on the Agriculture of Aizu) and others were compiled.

In the religious life of the village, the Shinjō-ji Temple (belonging to the Jōdo Sect) has played an important part, together with cult of Inari (the god of harvests). The village has dedicated the Nihongi Inari Shrine, and not a few families have erected a shrine dedicated to Inari in their grounds. Formerly, the religious associations “Konpirako” and “Kominegahara-kō” were very active. Men’s groups for trips to Ise and a women’s counterpart for tours in Aizu played an active role not only in the cult, but also in communication in their daily life.

Young wives who came to the village on marriage participated in the Aizu tour group as a start to their new lives in the community. These young wives, dressed in their Sunday best, attended the “Saimon-Gatari” (recital of address to the deities) held on January 12, to be introduced to the people of the village. Their lives were deeply involved in the production and sale of vegetables, as well as household affairs.

The development of village life was based on dry field farming. Also links with town life, such as the “Tōka-ichi” (markets opened on the 10th, 20th, and 30th days of the month) and the Ebisu-kō (fête in honor of Ebisu, the god of wealth) have marked their lives notably.

Admitting that the geographical conditions of the Aizu Region have largely controlled life in Makunouchi, it seems that being a suburb of a city has exerted much more influence.