Edo Citizens and the Handa-Inari-Jinja Shrine in Kasai Kanamachi-Mura

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Famous places for Edo citizens were places that promised "long-lasting energy" through interaction with nature and communion with the gods. Edo citizens started developing a wide range of excursion activities to famous places from the 18th century onwards, and various new sights were established in the suburbs of Edo. Most were within an approximate radius of two and a half ri (approx. 10 kilometers) from Nihonbashi. However, the Handa-inari-jinja shrine studied in this article was located in Katsushika-gun Higashikasai-ryo Kanamachi-mura; a distance of four ri from Edo, and a day trip was not impossible. Edo citizens made the short trip to the Handa-inari-jinja shrine because the benefits it promised were more than worth the trouble. While medical science at the time involved only symptomatic therapy, the shrine promised to cure smallpox, which was often fatal at the time if contracted.

Such relationship between the Handa-inari-jinja shrine and Edo citizens is observed from the existence of religious subjects, worshipping agencies, exhibiting a Buddhist image in Edo, etc. Because the worshipping agencies extolled the benefit of curing smallpox at the Handa-inari-jinja shrine in Edo, and Bando Mitsugoro danced on the Kabuki stage, the existence of the shrine was publicized further to Edo citizens. However, while the shrine was worshipped by Edo citizens and attracted many visitors, this still did not bring much prosperity to the Handa-inari-jinja shrine and Kanamachi-mura. This is the major difference from the Oji-inari-jinja shrine and Oji-mura that were also worshipped by Edo citizens.

The Oji-inari-jinja shrine was two and a half ri and the Handa-inari-jinja shrine was four ri from Edo. The difference of just one and a half ri seems small but may have been significant for Edo citizens. While the Oji-inari-jinja shrine attracted a number of Edo citizens as an all-seasons resort, it seems that the Handa-inari-jinja shrine could not do so on a steady basis, even given the strong benefit of curing smallpox. The difference between the Oji-inari-jinja shrine and the Handa-inari-jinja shrine leads us to conclude that Edo citizens made one-day excursions to famous places within the range of 10 kilometers around Nihonbashi. Despite the above, Edo citizens still visited the Handa-inari-jinja shrine because of its promise to cure smallpox.

Key words: Catpal city Edo, in the suburbs of Edo make a day's trip, smallpox, worshipping agency, Handa-inari-jinja shrine