

Chapter I: Folding Screens

Column 1: Folding Screens Lavishly Augment the Presence of People

At the Doll Festival on March 3rd, folding screens are sometimes displayed behind the *hina* dolls, especially behind the imperial prince (Emperor) and his bride (Empress) dolls on the top tier. The *hina byobu* (folding screen for hina dolls) (I-7) is one of the traditional hina decorations, and this custom dates back to the Edo period. Why are folding screens used? To emphasize the presence of the imperial prince and his bride seated on the top tier and to make them appear more splendid. The hina dolls are modeled after a traditional wedding ceremony of the imperial family. Even in modern wedding ceremonies, golden folding screens are sometimes placed behind the bride and groom. Folding screens are not only used at weddings but also at formal ceremonies to emphasize the authority of a powerful person. Because of their large size and strong presence, the titles or genres of the paintings or calligraphy on folding screens can reflect the status of the place where they are displayed, and inform those present about appropriate social behavior.