

Kijimun's Monologue —No.6—

Topic: *Sakuhō Nana en*

Keywords: *Sakuhō, Nana en, Kansen, Odori Buggyō*

Haisai, Kijimun *yaibīn!* (Hi, I'm Kijimun!) The autumn is the best season for reading; I'm personally hooked on the history. The Ryukyuan history is grand and mysterious, why don't you get into the world of the Ryukyuan history!

In the Ryukyuan history, *Sakuhō* (an investiture given by a Chinese Emperor) was a big event. The Chinese Emperor sent an envoy to inaugurate King of Ryukyu. It had a long history spanning from 1404 to 1866, and each time when the King of Ryukyu changed, the Chinese Emperor gave the investiture to him.

The party of Chinese envoy who came to Ryukyu consisted of about 500 people. At the top of the party, there were one senior envoy and one vice envoy. They stayed in Ryukyu from May to November almost all, as they sailed using seasonal wind.

Official events called *Nana en* (*nana* means seven, *en* means a banquet) were held during their stay. They were *Yusai en*, *Sappō en*, *Chūshū en*, *Chōyō en*, *Senbetsu en*, *Haiji en*, *Bōshū en*.

Among these parties, it was at *Chūshū en* and *Chōyō en* when performing arts was presented to the Chinese envoy. It was in 1719, at the time of *Chōyō en*, *Kumiodori* which is now designated as a World Heritage was performed for the first time in Ryukyuan history.

It was *Odori ho'u* (*odori* means dance, *ho'u* means a section), a temporary section which was organized to manage the performing arts for welcoming the Chinese envoy, of which head was *Odori Buggyō* (*bugyō* means a magistrate.) There were some hundreds of people working in this section, and they undertook all operational management regarding the performance.

Let's have a look at its backstage: well, there were many problems like, very small budget, lack the workforce, ten in one official left, besides that they could not make a theatrical costume planned before because the design of the cloth which had been bought in Kagoshima was not desired.

Regardless of these unexpected happenings, they managed to present outstanding entertainment. If you are interested in what was happened at that time, please refer to "*Kansen Odori ho'u Nikki* (completed in 1839)" from *Shōke Monjo!*

The performers, the players, and the staff were all men of *Shizoku* (a member of the gentry class,) especially the beauty of the young performers was beyond comparison. In "*Sakiyama no misono ikken*" from Nakahara Zenchū collection, there was a description from which we can see how beautiful they were, "Their skin is as white as snow, and their slender waist is like a willow tree."

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