

Kijimun's Monologue No.10

Monument of Takamine Tokumei, in Faculty of Medicine

Ii sōgwachi dēbiru! (Happy New Year!) *Kijimun yaibin!*

In this month, I'm going to introduce Monument of Takamine Tokumei.

Monument of Takamine Tokumei

It was on December 1st 1993 when a monument of Takamine Tokumei was built at the open space in front of *Gajumaru Kaikan* in the grounds of Faculty of Medicine. It was Okinawa Medical Association who donated this monument. They built it to praise the achievement of Gi Sitetsu (Takamine Oyakata Tokumei), an official of the Ryukyu Kingdom from *Kuninda**. He was the first man in the Ryukyu Kingdom who succeeded the surgery of cleft lip with use of general anesthesia.

About Gi Sitetsu (Takamine Oyakata Tokumei)

Gi Shitetsu was born in 1653, originally, he was not from *Kuninda*, but Ryukyu *Ōfu* recognized him for his ability of Chinese language, they gave him a family name of "Gi" (it is a Chinese family name), and then he moved to *Kuninda*. *Kuninda* is Kume, Naha city present-day, there was a community of people who supported the Ryukyu Kingdom regarding diplomatic relations with China, as an interpreter, for example. Among them, there were descendants of Chinese who had emigrated from Fujian in Ming dynasty period; Gi Shitetsu worked as an official of *Kuninda* same as they.

In 1688, at his 35 years old, Gi Shitetsu went to Fuzhou as an interpreter boarding on a tribute ship. In this ship, there was a sailor named Yonamine who was born with a cleft lip. His wife's brother, Ōmine Senyū spoke Chinese very well and got information that in

Fuzhou, there was a doctor who could cure the cleft lip, thanks to that, Yonamine could have an operation by the doctor. The Senior Envoy and the Vice Envoy on that tribute ship had heard about that, and they instructed Gi Shitetsu to learn the surgical technique from the doctor. Because, at that time, the grandson of King of Ryukyu, who later became King Shō Eki, was born with cleft lips, they wanted Gi Shitetsu would have an operation on the boy.

The doctor who treated Yonamine was HUANG Huiyou. Gi Shitetsu could study with him, get prescriptions, and went back to Ryukyu in May 1689 with a book in which hidden secrets of the surgery could be found. After that, he operated on some Ryukyuan boys and girls with cleft lip; then, in December 1689, he challenged to do an operation on Shō-Eki for cleft lip, and he succeeded in the surgery. These stories of Gi Shitetsu are recorded in his lineage documents.

It had been more than 100 years before 1804 when Hanaoka Seishū, a doctor from Wakayama, succeeded in an operation of breast cancer with general anesthesia. However, seeing from the viewpoint of Medical History, it is not confirmed that Gi Shitetsu was the first man in Japan who did an operation with general anesthesia, there will be more new lights on the matter with future research.



There are interesting spots in *Ryūdai* more; please look forward to next column!