

Kijimun' s Monologue No.12

A sundial (in front of Faculty of Law and Letters/Faculty of Tourism and Industrial Management)

Haisai! Kijimun yaibin.

I'm going to show you a sundial set up in front of Faculty of Law and Letters/Faculty of Tourism and Industrial Management.

A sundial is placed on the lawn in front of the main entrance of Faculty of Law and Letters/Faculty of Tourism and Industrial Management. This sundial was set up in March 1996 to commemorate the closing of Junior College of the University of the Ryukyus. A disk of the main body of the sundial is made of brass, and it has a diameter of 100 cm. The material of pedestal is andesite, 73 cm in height, about 150 cm in length and breadth.



Façade of the sundial



The disk

In front of the sundial, there are phrases curved, "Kōgaku Gnomon" and "The sun is new each day," the words of Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher. Gnomon is an indicator which casts a shadow on the disk of the sundial, and it means "guidelines" in ancient Greek. Thus, "Kōgaku Gnomon" means "A guideline for learners" (Kōgaku means "Desire to learn" in Japanese.) Besides, on the disk, directions for principal cities in the world are curved. It is written down to the plate which is stuck on the eastern side of the pedestal that this sundial was set up in hopes that young students who loved truth, justice, and peace would spread their wings around the world from Ryūdai campus. You see, the Gnomon has a shape of a bird!



A broken piece of the sundial at Rōkokumon

In connection with a sundial, I'd like to introduce some history of the timepiece in Ryukyu. In the era of Ryukyu Kingdom, a water clock (Rōkoku) set up at the Rōkoku mon (mon means gate in Japanese) in Shuri castle was mainly used for checking the time. Also, a sundial and a sand clock were supplementally used together. As the water clock of those days was not accurate, in 1739, Saion (a statesman of Ryukyu Kingdom) improved a sundial to check the time more properly. He set up a sundial on a small hill called Kukujiimui (Kōchi, Nishihara city, present-day, behind of current Adventist Medical Center,) placed an officer to make him monitor the sundial, and collected data. It is said that, after 1744, a new method based on the

data was used to check and to announce the time. In the University Museum, Fujukan, they have a broken piece of the sundial used in Shuri Castle. It is only existing material, and it served as a basis to reconstruct the sundial of Shuri Castle, which is currently set up.



This is the final monologue for FY2014. We have introduced a lot of historical sites and relics inside and outside of Ryūdai, how many spots did you ever know? We are now working to issue a guidebook and a map of them, we will be very happy if you go out with that and visit the locations. See you soon!