

The Return of Konpeitou

Eiji Kurihara, who previously wrote "Iroha ni Konpeitou" and also in charge of Salon 42 in Celluloid House, published a laborious work called "The Return of Konpeitou" with Kira Iriyama, who is the same age (born in 1943) and same profession (dentist) and has known him for 50 years. In this article, I would like to explain this labor.



Mr. Eiji Kurihara                      50 year's ago (left: Mr. Kurihara, right: Mr. Iriyama)    Present (left: Mr. Kurihara, right: Mr. Iriyama)

As I mentioned in Salon 43, Konpeitou (sugar candy) was first presented to Oda Nobunaga by Luis Frois in 1569. Since the manufacturing methods of the products at that time were different from those at present, the shape was not clear, and the size was several times larger. Saikaku Ihara wrote in "Nihon Eitaizo" that "The merchant in Nagasaki became wealthy in one generation by making Kompeitou", meaning it was made in Japan during the Genroku era. This has spread throughout the country.



Portuguese Konpeitou are bigger than Japanese ones

The unique shape of Konpeitou, but the ideal presentation to the Tokugawa Shogun was to have 36 horns, and the officials inspected each one and splashed the defective ones to make them their own. It was literally "suck the sweet nectar" and it's kind of the same as today.

The collection of Mr. Kurihara and Mr. Ihara boasts a rich variety of vehicles, watches, water bottles, animals, plants, and so on, with a collection history of 50 years. There are also collections of the situation of the times, such as the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Manchukuo, the Tripartite Pact, and the Tokyo Olympics which became a mirage. There are so many of the collections that a museum could be built.



Bus type



Watches are rare made of metal



For the water bottle type, a large amount of Konpeitou is contained. Many tin toy was produced for the ball pushing cat.

Materials also cover a wide range of fields, including glass, paper, and metals, among which celluloid is a particular topic. The celluloid has a bright color and is easy to process, and it is has delicate taste. Therefore, it was suitable as a container for Konpeitou used alone and even when combined with glass and other materials.

The Konpeitou container include airplanes, warships, animals, Akou Roshi, Momotaro, and Kewpie that you think is a typical celluloid toy, and you can feel some kind of brightness. Mr. Kurihara says he is attracted by its brightness and its thin and fragile delicacy, and it is a strange expression to be said.



Anglo-Japanese Alliance (Note 1)



Tripartite Alliance (Note 2)



Olympics that did not took place (Note 3)



Two Kewpies which is typical "Celluloid"

I can't describe the charm of "The Return of Konpeitou" in my own words. I would really like you to purchase the book. The book is published by Rittou-sha and will be 2475 yen including tax, but I guarantee that it will be worth more than the price. There is also an electronic publication, which I think is interesting as well.

Last but not least, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Kurihara for agreeing to publish each of the photos here.

Note 1: The alliance between Japan and Britain in 1902

Note 2: The alliance formed between Japan, Germany and Italy in 1940. The flag of the left container is from above to Japan, Germany, and Italy. The flag on the right is from the top of the government in Hebei Province, China from 1935 to 1938, which is a rare product because it has a very short existence period, Rising Sun flag and Manchukuo.

Note 3: Japan was scheduled to host the Tokyo Olympics in 1940, but due to the war, it gave it up in 1937. Later, the venue were changed to London and Helsinki and eventually cancelled.