Celluloid salon

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Kiyojiro Nagamine, a pioneer in celluloid molding

The celluloid industry is roughly divided into two. One is an industry that manufactures celluloid fabrics such as Daicel and Takiron. One is the industry that produces a variety of materials by molding fabric.

If the pioneers of the former are Rokusaburo Kocho, Minoru Chigusa, and Zenbei Miwa, the latter can be said to be Minoru Chigusa and Seijiro Nagamine.

This time, we will focus on Seijiro Nagamine (hereinafter referred to as "Okina"), a pioneer in celluloid molding and processing.

Seijiro nagamine (right) and his wife tomiko (left)

Okina, who was born in Osaka Prefecture in 1856, was the first person to engage in the manufacturing of pill. It was in 1882 (Meiji 35) that he became independent in Tokyo after he changed his works to yarn store and tortoiseshell wholesalers.

Okina, who was originally rich in the pioneering spirit, kept his eye on celluloid and began producing combs, which was called rubber as a new material in those days. It was in 1913 that he succeeded in manufacturing “Fukiage-dama” using thin materials after moving from Kanda Ward to Asakusa Ward.

Fukiage-dama, which are now made of plastic

At first, it was thought to be just a toy for a night stall, but Mitsukoshi ordered it, and then Mimitsu asked him to manufacture ping-pong balls, and he began to manufacture doll toys made by combining several balls.

Procedures for manufacturing toys include (1) clipped products such as windmills, and (2) hot-water pumps such as ping-pong balls, and blow molding. Okina developed the blow molding process. The variety of toys is widened by the molding method, in which a thin plate of celluloid is sandwiched between molds and steam is blown, followed by cooling.

Windmill by cuttings

Hot water pump

At first, Okina was also engaged in the production of hot water presses. Regarding the manufacturing order for ping-pong balls, which I mentioned earlier, it is said that the manufacturing of ping-pong balls was applied earlier than that of blowing-up balls. Anyway, this is how Okina's company developed.

In addition, he begun to manufacture bicycle products such as handle grips and chain covers, and have expanded his sales channels overseas.

In 1915 (Taisho 3), the World Exposition was held in San Francisco. A large number of celluloid toys exhibited at that time by Okina were found last year, and the toys returned to Japan.

As you can see, his achievements in celluloid processing, especially in toy manufacturing, are immeasurable, and even now that most celluloid toys have disappeared, his legacy has been passed on and will continue to live on in the future.