

私の住む米国アイオワ州にある、マスカティーナ博物館には100年以上前に造られた小さな日本庭園があり、長年、地元の住民に愛されてきました。そして、つい先日、数年に渡る改修が終了したのですが、その庭園の歴史について何も記録が残っておらず、誰が造ったのかも分かっていませんでした。

そこで、私が調査を依頼され、その庭園を造ったのは高知出身の大塚太郎で、当時は「ガーデン・キング」と呼ばれ、アメリカの中西部を中心に多くの日本庭園を造ったことが分かってきました。

しかし、彼は母国の日本ではほとんど知られておらず、私はアメリカに残された資料を中心に、調査を進め、彼について1冊の本を出版しました。英語になりますが、私の調査に協力していただいたオーテピア図書館と高知城博物館に寄贈させていただいたので、ご興味のある方はぜひご覧になっていただきたいと思います。

その大塚太郎は明治元年、土佐藩の藩士、大塚勝宜の息子として生まれました。孫文を助けた萱野長知の従弟でもあり、後にアメリカを訪問した孫文をシカゴで歓待し、萱野からのメッセージを伝えていたようです。

さて、廃藩置県により、武士としての職業がなくなり、新たな仕事を探すことになったためだと思います。彼は1897年に渡米し、最初はシアトル近郊で大陸横断鉄道工事の仕事に就き、石材の手配などを行っていたようで、その経験を活かしたのか、1905年頃からシカゴ地域で石組みを中心とした日本庭園を造り始めました。当時は万博の影響でちょっとした日本庭園ブームが起こっており、当時の雑誌に彼は広告を載せて、ビジネスとして大成功したようです。こちらの博物館の他にもタイヤで有名なグッドイヤーの創業者セイバーリングの豪邸の庭の一部には、彼が造った日本庭園が残されています。この庭園はシカゴの近くのアクロンにあり、人気の観光スポットになっています。

ただ、大塚は1933年のシカゴ万国博覧会で日本庭園を手掛けた後、1937年に妻が死去した後は日本に戻り、その後の消息が分かりませんでした。高知に墓がある可能性も考慮して、筆山などでも調査を（私はコロナ禍で行けませんでした）依頼して行いましたが、結局、手がかりは見つかりませんでした。もし、高知新聞の読者の方で、大塚太郎について何かご存じの方がいたら、ぜひご連絡をいただきたいと思います。

最後に、日本での調査を手伝っていただき、筆山でやぶ蚊と闘いながらお墓を探してくれた高元太郎さん、その彼をサポートしていただいたオートピア図書館の中嶋さん、高知城博物館の渡辺館長と高木さんに、感謝いたします。

ベス・コーディ

The Muscatine Museum in Iowa, the United States, where I live, has a small Japanese garden that was built over 100 years ago and has been loved by local residents for many years. Recently, several years of renovations were completed, but there was no record of the garden's history, and no one knew who had built it.

So, I was asked to investigate, and I'm pretty sure (or some other word that means about 99% certain) the person who created the garden was Taro Otsuka, a Kochi native who was known as the "Garden King" at the time and was known to have created many Japanese gardens mainly in the Midwest of the United States.

However, he was little known in his home country of Japan, so I researched the materials left behind in America and published a book about him. It will be in English, but it has hundreds of beautiful pictures of Japanese gardens and I have donated it to Otepia Library and Kochi Castle Museum, which cooperated with my research, so I would like anyone who is interested to take a look.

Taro Otsuka was born in the first year of the Meiji era as the son of Katsuyoshi Otsuka, a samurai of the Tosa domain, whose house was where Nakajima-cho Park is today. He was also the cousin of Nagatomo Kayano, who helped Sun Yat-sen, and it seems that he later welcomed Sun Yat-sen in Chicago when he visited America, and conveyed a message from Kayano.

Now, I think this is because due to the abolition of feudal domains and the establishment of prefectures, there was no longer any occupation as a samurai, and his father had to look for a new job, so he started a mining company, which Taro Otsuka also worked in. It was at that time that he became interested in arranging rocks and building waterfalls.

He came to the United States in 1897 and first did translation work with Japanese workers on the transcontinental railroad near Seattle. He and his wife moved to Chicago around 1905, and he began focusing on stone masonry work and building Japanese gardens. At that time, there was a slight boom in Japanese gardens due to the World's Fair, and he placed many advertisements in magazines at the time, which seems to have made him a huge success as a business. He probably built more than 50 gardens. In addition to this museum, part of the garden of the mansion of Goodyear's founder, Seiberling, who is famous for tires, has a Japanese garden built by him. This garden is located in Akron, between Chicago and New York City, and is a popular tourist attraction.

However, after Otsuka designed the Japanese garden for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair in 1933, he returned to Japan after his wife (Yoneko, daughter of Utaka Kamura) died in 1937, and his whereabouts were not known after that. Considering the possibility that there may be a grave in Kochi, I requested that a survey be conducted in Hitsuzan and other places (although I was unable to go due to the coronavirus pandemic), but in the end, no clues were found. If any readers of the Kochi Shimbun know anything about Taro Otsuka (or his uncle, Otsuka Naoharu Katsumasa 大塚直治勝政, born around 1850), please contact us.

Lastly, I would like to thank Mr. Taro Takamoto, who helped with the research in Japan and searched for the grave while fighting the mosquitoes in Hitsuzan, Mr. Nakajima from the Otepia Library, Director Watanabe and Mr. Takagi of the Kochi Castle Museum who supported him for the search. During my research, I greatly enjoyed learning about beautiful Kochi and its important history, and I really hope to visit to see it for myself soon.

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