

Kurume History Walks

No.45 Following the Footsteps of the Lords around 1600

小早川・田中の時代をたずねて

The three lords ruled Kurume for about three decades around 1600. It was a period when the Tokugawa Shogunate was about to begin after successive wars had ended. They formed both the governance structure and the foundation of the castle town that the Arima family, the inheritor, continued to utilize during their rule of 240 years. We present the achievements of the lords that led to the modern era of the Kurume and the places linked to them.

The Reign of Kobayakawa Hidekane

In 1587, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, regarded as one of three unifiers of Japan, marched into Kyushu with his large armies and forced the Shimazu family, which had resisted until the end, to surrender. He reassigned the feudal lords and distributed the territory to them. Kobayakawa Hidekane became the lord of Kurume Castle and received the area around the current Kurume city and Ogori city. As well as governing the territory, he participated in two of Hideyoshi's campaigns against Korea. He also exercised strong authority over territorial control, destroying the Kusano clan, a powerful clan in Chikugo Province since the Middle Ages, and killing the heads of the priests of Mount Kora, a powerful military force.

Kobayakawa Hidekane 小早川秀包 (1567-1601) was the 9th son of Mori Motonari, the lord of the Chugoku Region. In 1579, Hidekane was adopted by Takakage, his brother. In 1583, he was sent as a hostage to Hideyoshi, who named him “Toshiro Hidekane 藤四郎秀包” with the characters “秀” and “藤” from Hideyoshi’s past and present names. In 1585, he received Uwa district in Iyo Province with 35,000 kokus* for his war success during the attack on Shikoku. In 1586, he participated many battles in Kyushu offensive and rendered distinguished service.

He became a Christian upon the recommendation of Kuroda Josui. He married Otomo Sorin’s daughter, a devoted Christian, in 1587 with Hideyoshi’s intermediation.

*‘Koku 石’ was a volume unit for measuring the rice quantity and for evaluating the income of a samurai in feudal Japan. One koku is about 180 liters of rice, enough to support one person for a single year.

1 Kobayakawa-jinja Shrine

During his rule, the main bailey is supposed to exist near the current ground of the medical school of Kurume University, with the main gate facing east. Today, there is the Kobayakawa-jinja Shrine in the precinct of Sasayama-jinja Shrine on Kurume Castle Ruins. This miniature shrine, dedicated to him, is inscribed with Saint Andrew's Cross, a Christian symbol.

At that time, there was a church in the castle town with about 7,000 followers.



Kobayakawa-jinja Shrine

2 Monument of the Eight Graves

In 1591, Hidekane invited Rinkei, the chief priest of Mount Kora, and Ryoha, his son, to the castle for a drinking party. When they left the castle, Hidekane had his samurais kill these two and their eight retainers running away to Kora Mountain. Eight graves were built at the place, where the eight were attacked, on the north side of today's Nihon Seimei Building. A monument was built after the gravestones had been moved to the precinct of the Io-ji Temple due to the construction of the building in August 1980. The path they run on has existed since the Middle Ages.



Monument of the Eight Graves

The Reign of the Tanaka Family

In 1600, during the Battle of Sekigahara, the largest and most significant battle in Japanese feudal history, Kobayakawa Hidekane belonged to the Western Army, which included the loyalists of Hideyoshi and many lords from western Japan. But they were defeated by the Eastern Army under Tokugawa Ieyasu.

After Hidekane, Tanaka Yoshimasa, from the Eastern Army, entered Yanagawa Castle as lord of the entire province of Chikugo. Yoshimasa excelled in politics and military affairs and had a great knowledge of civil and hydrological engineering. He pursued an ambitious policy on his own, although Tadamasu, his son, built a bureaucratic system.

They also donated to temples and shrines ravaged by the successive wars, such as the Zendo-ji Temple and the Daizen-ji Tamatare-gu Shrine.

Tanaka Yoshimasa 田中吉政 (1548-1609) was born in the present Shiga prefecture. Under the rule of Hideyoshi, he became the lord of Okazaki Castle in Mikawa Province.

In the Battle of Sekigahara, he joined Ieyasu's Eastern Army and captured Ishida Mitsunari, general of the enemy army. For a series of his exploits, he was transferred from Okazaki Domain of Mikawa Province with 100,000 kokus to the entire province of Chikugo with over 300,000 kokus.

3 Yanagawa Okan Road (Tanaka Road)

Yoshimasa was based in Yanagawa Castle and developed a transportation system to and from branch castles in the territory. Above all, he constructed Yanagawa Okan, a major road called between his castle and Kurume Castle, the second base.

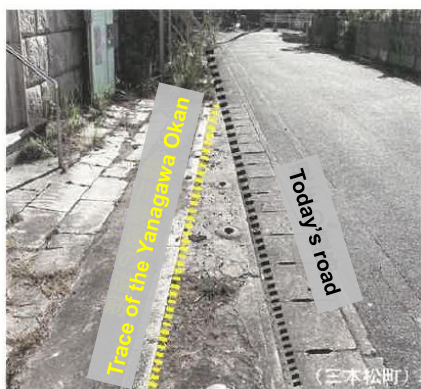
Later, during the reign of the Arima family, Fudanotsuji, meaning a crossroad with information boards, became the starting point of Yanagawa Okan.



Former Fudanotsuji Site

The road was changed due to damage from World War II, but there is a trace in front of the old Kurume City Library West Branch. The current Fukuoka Prefectural Road 23 traces most of the Yanagawa Okan.

Yoshimasa set up towns along the road and established markets. In later generations, people erected shrines dedicated to Yoshimasa in honor of his achievements. These shrines are handed down along the road, while some shrines were relocated or merged. Our city has the Tsubuku-hachiman Shrine and the Yasutake-hachiman Shrine, both dedicated to him.



In front of the old Kurume City Library West Branch

4 Memorial Tower of Tanaka Yoshimasa

In 1609, Yoshimasa died in Kyoto on the way to Edo, the capital. He was 62 years old. His remains were buried in the Shinsho-ji Temple in Yanagawa, and the memorial tower to him was erected in the Zendo-ji Temple in Kurume.

Before Yoshimasa restored the latter temple, it had suffered disasters. In the middle of the 16th century, the army of Bekki Dosetsu, a subordinate of the Otomo family killed trainee monks and burnt down its halls. On the occasion of the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, Kuroda Josui had its halls again destroyed.

Yoshimasa, as lord of the whole province of Chikugo, contributed to the revival of the temple. Tadamasu, the successor, erected a mausoleum dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder and first shogun of the Tokugawa Shogunate of Japan. Its memorial tower remains in the precinct.

5 Memorial Tower to Tanaka Norimasa

There is a memorial tower to Norimasa, the second son of Yoshimasa. The father was based in Yanagawa Castle, made Norimasa the lord of Kurume Castle, and placed his retainers in other branch castles. This fact shows the importance of Kurume Castle. There are two theories about the day of Norimasa's death: in 1606 or 1610.



Tanaka-jinja Shrine (Tsubuku-hachiman Shrine)



Memorial Tower to Tanaka Yoshimasa



Memorial Tower to Tanaka Norimasa

6 Stone Torii Gate of the Daizenji-tamataregu Shrine

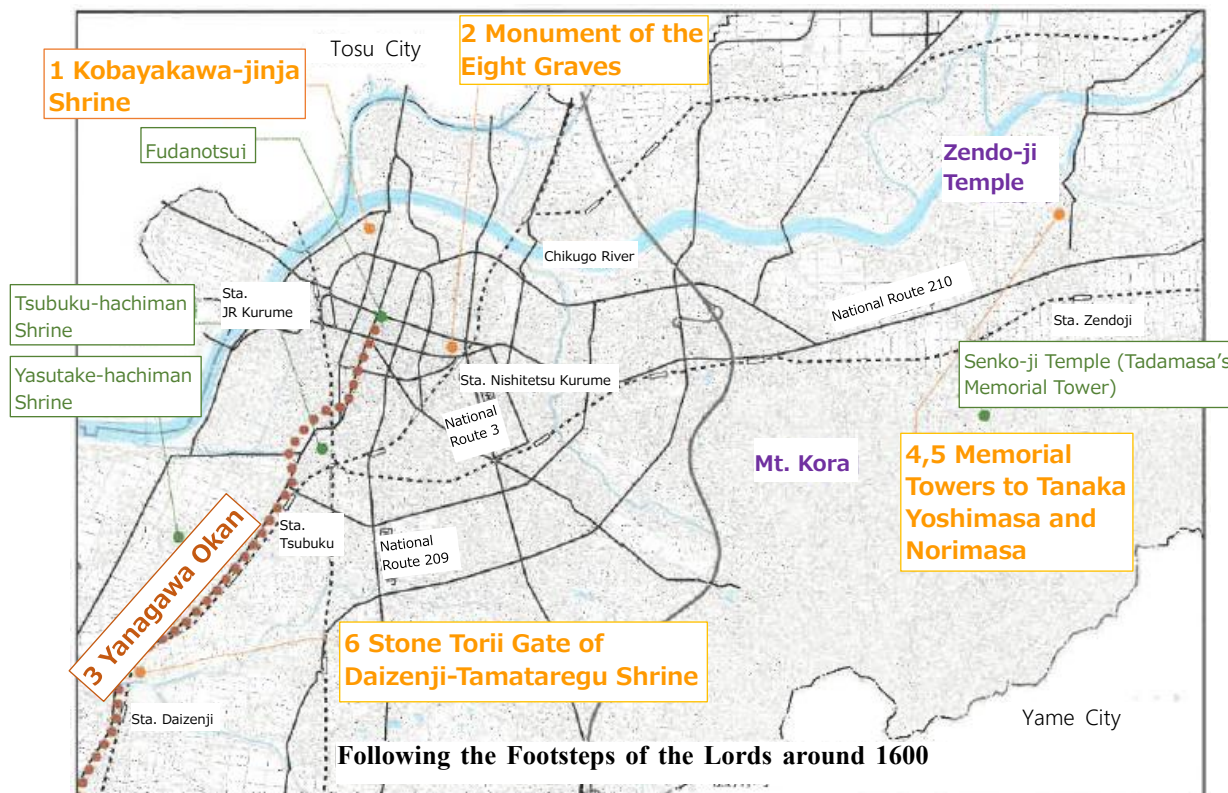
Yoshimasa gave generous protection to the shrine by giving the temple territory of 300 kokus in 1601 and donating a temple bell in 1604. The stone torii gate was offered by Tadamas, the fourth son and the successor, in 1618. There is an inscription of Tadamas's name on a pillar on the right side when facing the shrine and other inscriptions of some names and the donation time (spring, Genna 4th [1618]) on the pillar on the left side. This torii, municipally designated as cultural property, is the second oldest gate after the one of Kitano-tenmangu Shrine, constructed in 1607 and prefecturally designated as cultural property.



Stone Torii Gate of Daizenji-tamataregu Shrine

After Yoshimasa died in 1609, Tadamas inherited the territory but died of illness at 36 in 1620. The body was buried at Kichijoji, Edo. The memorial tower was built in the Senko-ji Temple in Kurume.

He did not have a male child as a successor. The Tanaka family is extinct. Tokugawa government took over Chikugo Province for a while before Arima Toyouji entered Kurume Castle as lord of the Northern Chikugo of 210,000 kokus in 1621.



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