

# **I. History and Characteristics of Kanazawa**

## Geography

Kanazawa is a medium-sized city with a population of 450,000 people, located roughly in the middle of the Sea of Japan side of the island of Honshu, which is the central region of the Japanese archipelago.

From ancient times, the interchange of people, goods, and information with China, Korea, and Siberia on the Asian mainland has thrived in this region, which also benefits from its excellent natural environment, resulting in the development of a rich and distinctive culture. Moreover, from medieval to modern times, Kanazawa has actively engaged in scholastic culture and economic exchange, etc., with Kyoto, the former capital of Japan, and Edo (currently Tokyo), and has prospered as the largest city in the Sea of Japan's coastal region.



Location of Kanazawa

Kanazawa experiences the changes of four distinct seasons, and as part of the Sea of Japan climatic region, is one of Japan's wettest areas. The Tsushima Current that flows along the Sea of Japan gives the region a milder winter than other regions on the same latitude, while at the same time, the northwestern seasonal winds carry water vapor that eventually falls as snow. Winters are dominated by cloudy skies with little sunshine during the day, facilitating the accumulation of wet and heavy snow. The city is bordered by the Sea of Japan on the west, and the Mount Haku range on the east. With this terrain in the background, Kanazawa's old urban district has a diverse structure, with three hills (Utatsuyama, Kodatsuno, Teramachi) and two rivers (Asano River, Sai River).

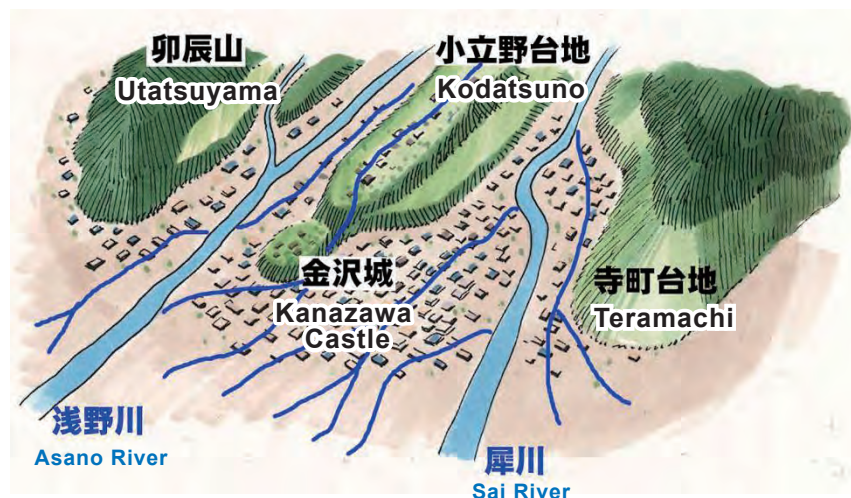


Figure Kanazawa's Landscape

## History

The urban district, spreading over the river terrace formed by Asano River and Sai River, has many locations that show the various faces of the city, including hilly streets on the undulating terrain and commanding heights providing an excellent view. In addition, the highland running from southwest to northeast through the urban district retains abundant greenery, and water from the rivers is piped throughout the city, forming a corridor of water and greenery.

It is said that the name "Kanazawa" (literally "gold marsh") came from the washing of locally mined gold in a marsh, but the origin of the city can be traced to the establishment of a rare autonomous government of farmers by a follower of the Ikko sect of Buddhism approximately 500 years ago, during Japan's medieval period. For the next century, the "peasant's kingdom" prospered with the Kanazawa Mido Temple, built in the middle of the 16th century, and the temple township, which later became the Kanazawa Castle area, as its center.

The Kanazawa Mido Temple was the Kaga base for Honganji Ikko Sect Buddhists, but after the suppression of the Ikko insurgency, Kanazawa Castle was built on the ruins of the Kanazawa Mido Temples, and a castle town was constructed, absorbing the former temple township. The Maeda Clan, the new rulers of the castle, became the most powerful feudal leaders of the Edo Period, with a domain of 1.2 million koku, including the three provinces of Kaga, Echū, and Noto, establishing Kanazawa as the center of politics, economy, and culture, ultimately making it one of Japan's representative castle towns that prospered for almost three hundred years. The castle town consisted of a group of small castle towns headed by powerful retainers related to the castle. The unique cityscape has been maintained until the present day, with the castle compound surrounded by the old streets, neighborhood divisions, gardens, water systems, plazas, etc., and though there is no castle wall such as that found in European cities, there are temples located in the area which also functioned for defense.

(1 koku, the unit of income for samurai of the period, equaled approximately 150 kg of rice)

During the Edo Period, the Kaga Maeda Clan abandoned military confrontation with the Edo Shogunate in favor of civil administration, promoting and popularizing scholarship, craftwork, and the arts. Prominent scholars were welcomed from throughout Japan and supported in their writing, prompting Arai Hakuseki to say that "Kaga is the library of the realm." A workshop opened in the 17th century was originally assigned the duty of repairing weapons and armor, but was transformed into a workshop for artisans engaging in work related to fixtures and furniture in the castle, and was used to train craftsmen for metalwork, lacquer work, etc., with master craftsmen invited from Kyoto and Edo as instructors. Even the domain lord himself enjoyed Noh theater and the tea ceremony, which became widely popular among the retainers and townspeople. It is even said that artisans from the workshop went to practice Noh every other day. In this manner, the warrior(samurai) culture referred to as the "Million-koku Culture" was established in the Kaga Domain in the latter half of the 17th century.

With the abolition of feudal domains and the establishment of prefectures after the Meiji Restoration, the domain lord and Maeda Clan left for Tokyo, the samurai class went into decline, and the population of Kanazawa, fourth largest after Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto at the time of the Meiji Restoration, dropped rapidly from 130,000 to 80,000, and it appeared that Kanazawa would fall behind the times.

However, as it entered the 1890s, Kanazawa achieved its own industrial revolution revolving around fast-rising businessmen, and began to progress anew. What transformed the castle town into Kanazawa was the development of the textile industry, chiefly the production of "habutae" silk for export, and the textile machine industry that supported it.

The foundation for this development was the craftwork promoted by the domain during the Edo Period. The master craftsmen invited to the workshop from throughout Japan provided instruction in inlay crafts, metal casting, joining, etc., and many townspeople became skilled artisans as well. The latter part of the Edo Period saw the development of the use of cams and rods and other technology that was cutting-edge craftsmanship at the time. While it is true that these master craftsmen saw a decline after losing their patron the Kaga Domain due to the Meiji Restoration, regional innovators appeared, opening new paths with the development and production of the automatic loom, leading to a flourishing of the textile industry.

A typical case is that of Tsuda Yonejiro. His father, Tsuda Kichinosuke, was a master carpenter who served as the chief construction carpenter for the Oyama Shrine, one of the most famous of Kanazawa's Meiji Era architectural structures, which has been designated as an important cultural asset. The shrine was constructed with a Chinese-style gate and a belfry with stained-glass windows, allowing it to function as a lighthouse for distant ships on the Sea of Japan, a rather avant-garde design at the time. In addition to architecture, he was famous as a master of the use of cams and rods for clockwork craftsmanship. In 1875, he observed the machinery at the Tomioka Thread Manufacturing Factory in Gunma Prefecture, and installed machines modeled after them in the Kanazawa Thread Manufacturing Factory that had been started by entrepreneur Hasegawa Junya, who would later become the second mayor of Kanazawa.

Ten years later, Tsuda's son Yonejiro and his cousin Komajiuro established their own organization and produced the "Tsuda-style loom." Tsudakoma Corporation, started by Komajiuro, is currently active as the world-renowned manufacturer of the water jet loom and other innovative high-speed looms. In this manner the skill and know-how of Edo Period artisans has been innovated and applied to modern industry as it has developed.

We can see, then, that the historical characteristics of Kanazawa as a Creative City include the following.

- 1) During the 425 years since feudal lord Maeda Toshiie formed a castle town around Kanazawa Castle in 1583, Kanazawa has avoided the ravages of war, has loved peace, has fostered culture, and has been a "human scale" city that has maintained an autonomous economy.
- 2) During the Edo Period, successive clan leaders promoted artistic handicraft and scholastic culture, establishing the warrior(samurai) culture that has been called the "Million-koku Culture." This was maintained in different forms during the modernization that began with the Meiji Restoration, becoming the underpinnings for today's Kanazawa Culture - philosophy, artistic handicraft, traditional culture (Noh, tea ceremony), food culture - maintaining a high quality of life for Kanazawa's citizens.
- 3) During the process of modernization that began in the Meiji Period, Kanazawa was able to achieve its own industrial revolution utilizing the knowledge and tradition of artistic manufacturing, and through the development of the long-lasting twin industries of textiles and textile machinery, has been able to achieve an economic structure that balances the economy and culture.
- 4) During the period of high economic growth following World War Two, and the globalization that followed, the textile industry saw high growth and then a decline. In these circumstances, Kanazawa has utilized its accumulated cultural and intellectual capital in an effort to foster a new creative culture industry through an amalgamation of cutting-edge art and traditional crafts.

## Cultural Mode of Production

A characteristic of the urban economy of Kanazawa, which has experienced this type of endogenous development, is the gathering of a large number of small- and medium-sized companies which have achieved continuous development in the area. Many of these are companies with an abundance of the artisan spirit, specially skilled in innovation, which maintain the top share in a "niche area" (niche top) with unique technology. While stimulating each other, these companies provide a highly autonomous urban economy that leads to development.

Specifically, as indicated above, first the textile and textile machine industries developed mutually in the region, but in recent years, machine tool and food-related machinery industries, the publishing and printing industries, as well as computer-related industries, have seen development, maintaining a diverse industrial structure, and the traditional industries, food industries, and apparel industries, etc., which support the "quality of life" of the citizens, have developed as well.

Because this type of endogenous development of Kanazawa's economy has led to the suppression of large-scale exogenous development of industry, allowing Kanazawa to avoid rapid transformation of its industry and city structure, the city has been able to maintain its unique traditional industries that have continued since the Edo Period, as well as its historical cityscape and surrounding natural environment, etc., and Kanazawa takes pride in its urban beauty and abundance of amenities. It has also enabled Kanazawa to prevent local income from its unique urban economy structure — something that was not lost even after modernization — from "leaking" outside the region, making it possible for medium-sized companies continually to innovate and engage in cultural investment.

In addition, this urban economy structure has brought about the development of the information industry and a variety of service industries, as well as the establishment of colleges and universities (13, including Kanazawa University, Kanazawa College of Art, and Kanazawa Institute of Technology), technical schools, and a large number of museums, resource centers, and other sites of scholastic culture, providing a uniquely high-quality urban culture. In other words, the city's internal circulation of excess economy has maintained the high quality of cultural and intellectual capital.

We can call this method of developing new industry for the development of the urban economy through high-quality cultural concentration the "cultural mode of production utilizing cultural capital." The "cultural mode of production" that Kanazawa has implemented in the past and at which it aims consists of the following.

- (1) Produce goods and services with high cultural value added, through the integration of the skills and sensibilities of the artisans with high-tech devices in the production process,
- (2) Create a tightly knit, organic industry-related structure of companies developing endogenously in the region, ranging from the life culture industry to the mechatronics and software design industries, in order to
- (3) Circulate income obtained outside the region within the region, with an aim toward new cultural expenditure and consumption.
- (4) The cultural expenditures would go to the construction of museums and the support of private design research centers and orchestras, etc., and the increased cultural concentration in the city would result in the development and establishment in the region of high-tech/high-touch creative human resources, the players in the cultural mode of production.
- (5) Cultural consumption is a production and consumption system that increases the quality of local consumer markets and stimulates the demand for the cultural mode of production through consumers who have the ability to enjoy goods and services that have abundant cultural and artistic qualities.

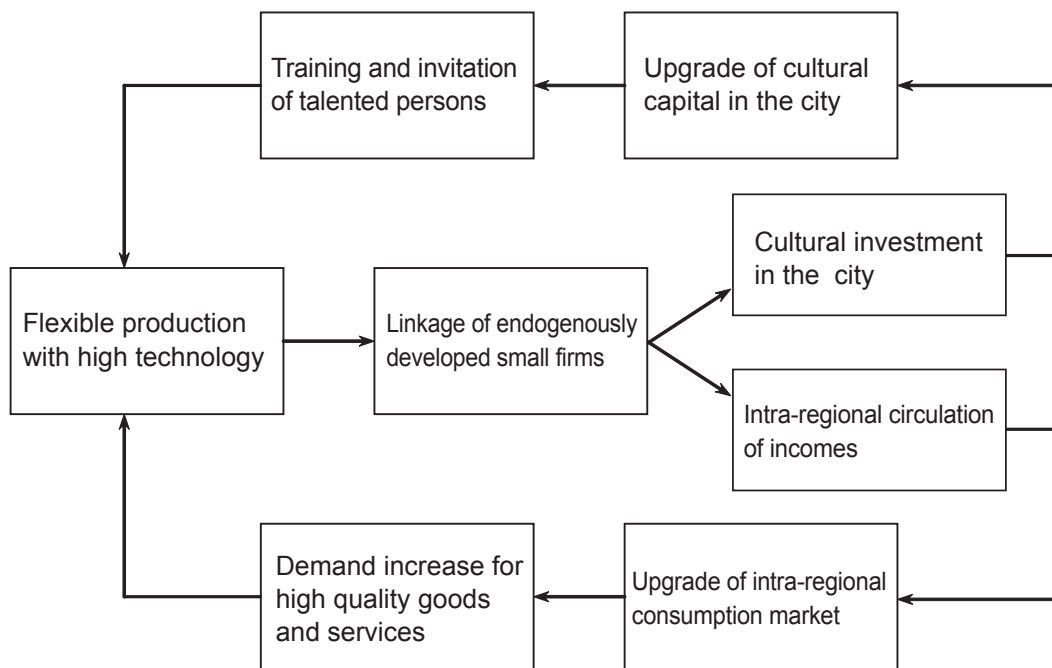


Figure Cultural Mode of Production

The source of this system, Kanazawa's unique culture, was granted the patronage and promotion of scholastic culture by successive clan leaders and has continued to permeate the lives of the city's inhabitants, being passed down through the long generations of peace since the Edo Period. In addition, the mental and spiritual climate that had been developed throughout the history of Kanazawa

tilled the soil for the enjoyment of traditional arts and crafts by individual citizens, producing a variety of thinkers, including Suzuki Daisetsu (D.T. Suzuki), who popularized Japanese Zen Buddhism overseas, and leading Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitaro. For example, to protect the style of Noh drama called "Kaga Hosho," the Kaga Domain promoted its practice among the townspeople. Eventually, gardeners began to sing Noh chants while they pruned trees, and even now Noh is a living, breathing part of the lives of the people of Kanazawa, so much so that it is said that "it rains Noh." In addition, in the Bushido (the Way of the Samurai) of Nitobe Inazo, influenced by Nishida Kitaro, the tea ceremony culture that has been advocated as an art that is more mental training than mere ritual, took root in the lives of the people. The Ohi pottery that developed as tea utensils and the traditional Japanese confectionaries that are served together with tea, have become a familiar part of daily life. There are traditional Japanese confectionaries for each of the four seasons, and in particular, the delicate and colorful Jonamagashi can be considered a type of art produced by a high level of artisan technology.



Tea Ceremony



Traditional Japanese Confectionary



Traditional Japanese Confectionery

Positioning the "cultural mode of production" in Kanazawa anew in its historical development, in a sense, it can be viewed as a resurrection and rebuilding of the craftwork production that began in the Edo Period. The contemporary cultural mode of production (new craft production) that was rebuilt after the transition from medieval craft production to mass production resulting from the industrial revolution, is truly one characteristic of Kanazawa as a Creative City, in that it was built on the development of the "craftwork production system" that was fostered from the Edo Period on.

The accumulation of scholastic culture is what made it possible for the spirit of the craftwork and artisanship to develop and produce new added value. Kanazawa possesses the spirit of craftwork and artisanship built on the background of the scholastic culture developed over a half century. That spirit combines both functionality and artistic qualities as summed up in the expression "functional beauty," making the development of a cultural mode of production possible through creating a balance between economic and cultural value in goods and services, positioning itself at its heart.