



II. Kanazawa's Traditional Crafts

(1) Kanazawa as a City of Crafts

One characteristic of Kanazawa as a City of Crafts is the heavy concentration of artisan workshops in the midst of a traditional cityscape; craftwork continues to be favored as a part of daily life in a traditional lifestyle. The background for this is the work of the Kaga Maeda Clan to stimulate craftwork beginning in the Edo Period.

The founder of the "Million-koku Culture" and third-generation domain lord Maeda Toshitsune opened a workshop in Kanazawa Castle and invited master craftsmen from Kyoto and Edo to serve as instructors to develop craftsmen and artisans in metalwork, lacquer work, etc., for the domain lord. The fifth-generation domain lord Maeda Tsunanori recorded their secret techniques in "Hyakkohisho."

"Hyakkohisho" is a compilation of craftwork products and techniques from each field, gathered and named by Tsunanori himself, with place of production, name, etc., recorded on a portion of the materials, and is characterized by its clear organization and classification. The collection was stored in two boxes according to materials, use, and form, and nails, pearls, etc., were wrapped together in Japanese paper. It is difficult to obtain an accurate count of the total number of items, but it comes to at least 2,000, and the collection has been designated as an important cultural asset of Japan.

The Maeda Clan collected one hundred master techniques and provided a "place" to stimulate the creativity to compare and examine them, providing a variety of challenges. This created a foundation for the development of a variety of craftwork. The domain lord's personal artisans eventually began working in the town as well, popularizing their craft among the retainers and townspeople, contributing to the improvement of their quality of life.

The tea ceremony and Noh, the "flowers" of the "Million-koku Culture," were promoted among the artisans and townspeople living in the castle towns, and Kanazawa continues to maintain its unique scenic view of many Japanese-style homes that have Noh stages and tea rooms. Kanazawa has a history of religious devotion going back to the temple townships, and many traditional homes, rooted in the culture of the snow country, have unique internal decor utilizing Buddhist altars, transoms, etc., that give full play to the skills of artisans. The castle town's cultural scenery, traditional arts, and traditional crafts have been maintained as a unit, with 22 major traditional crafts currently existing, with a diversity of content that surpasses that of Kyoto. Kanazawa has also given birth to the Order of Culture, Person of Cultural Merits, members of the Japan Art Academy and holders of important intangible cultural assets (living national treasures) in the past, such as Yoshida Saburo (engraving/member of the Japan Art Academy), Matsuda Gonroku (maki-e/Order of Culture /member of the Japan Art Academy), Takamitsu Kazuya (portraits/Person of Cultural Merits/member of the Japan Art Academy), Akaji Yusai (lacquer/holder of important intangible cultural assets), Kimura Uzan (Yuzen/holder of important intangible cultural assets), Himi Kodo (woodcraft/holder of important intangible cultural assets), Hata Tokio (Yuzen/holder of important intangible cultural assets), Terai Naoji (maki-e/holder of important intangible cultural assets). Taking an active part as of today, are Hasuda Shugoro (metal-casting/member of the Japan Art Academy), Ohi Chozaemon (Toshiro) (ceramics/Person of Cultural Merits /member of the Japan Art Academy), Murata Shozo (oil painting/member of the Japan Art Academy), Oba Shogyo (maki-e/holder of important intangible cultural assets), Uozumi Iraku (Yasuhiko) (gongs/holder of important intangible cultural assets),

and Nakagawa Mamoru (metal engraving/holder of important intangible cultural assets). In the traditional crafts of ceramics, lacquer, woodwork, metalwork, and dyeing in particular, there are many artists active on a national level, and Kanazawa boasts the largest number of holders of important intangible cultural assets (living national treasures) per capita in Japan, outdistancing even Tokyo and Kyoto, making it possible to view Kanazawa as Japan's truly representative city of crafts.

(2) Major Traditional Craftwork

The following is an introduction to the representative crafts.

First we will look at the types of craft that have been legally designated in relation to the promotion of Japan's traditional craft industry: Kanazawa gold leaf, Kanazawa lacquer ware, Kaga-yuzen silk dyeing, Kutani porcelain, Kaga embroidery, and Kanazawa Buddhist home altars.

-Kanazawa gold leaf

A document issued by Kaga Domain clan founder Maeda Toshiie in 1593 giving orders for the manufacture of gold and silver leaf, provides insight into the origins of Kanazawa gold leaf, suggesting that there were leafing artisans before that time. It is believed that the subsequent establishment of a glamorous warrior culture by the Maeda Clan increased the demand for leafing in Kanazawa, and many leafing artisans were summoned to Kanazawa in the early part of the Edo Period and flourished there.

However, Edo Shogunate placed tight restrictions on gold and silver, and at the end of the 17th century, the manufacturing of gold leaf was limited to Edo, and silver leaf to Kyoto. From that time, leafing technology was passed down in Kanazawa through the manufacturing of brass leafing, which was not prohibited, the reworking of gold and silver leafing that had been purchased in Edo and Kyoto, etc. But in the latter part of the Edo Period, the persistent efforts of artisans seeking authorization to engage in gold leafing, paid off, and the manufacturing of gold leafing in Kanazawa was authorized, though limited to that used by the clan.

As the Meiji Period began, restrictions on gold leafing were lifted, and the Shogunate's patronage of Edo gold leafing ceased completely, while at the same time the superiority of Kanazawa's leafing technology and the suitability of Kanazawa's climate and water, etc., for the manufacturing of leafing were recognized throughout Japan. Moreover, leafing manufacturer Miura Hikotaro developed a mechanized gold leaf press, and Kanazawa rapidly developed as a producer of gold leafing. Kanazawa now accounts for 98% or more of Japan's gold leaf production, and 100% of silver and brass leafing.



Making process

The three unique characteristics of Kanazawa gold leaf - it does not oxidize, it does not become discolored, and it does not corrode - make it indispensable for the production of a wide variety of arts and crafts, etc., including home altars, gilded folding screens, Nishijin brocade, lacquer ware, the interior decor of architectural structures, and exterior decor.

With changes in lifestyle in recent years, there has been an increase in cross-industrial association, and a wide

variety of uses have been opened up, including for telephone cards, interior accessories, locally brewed sake, snacks and other food products, and even cosmetics.

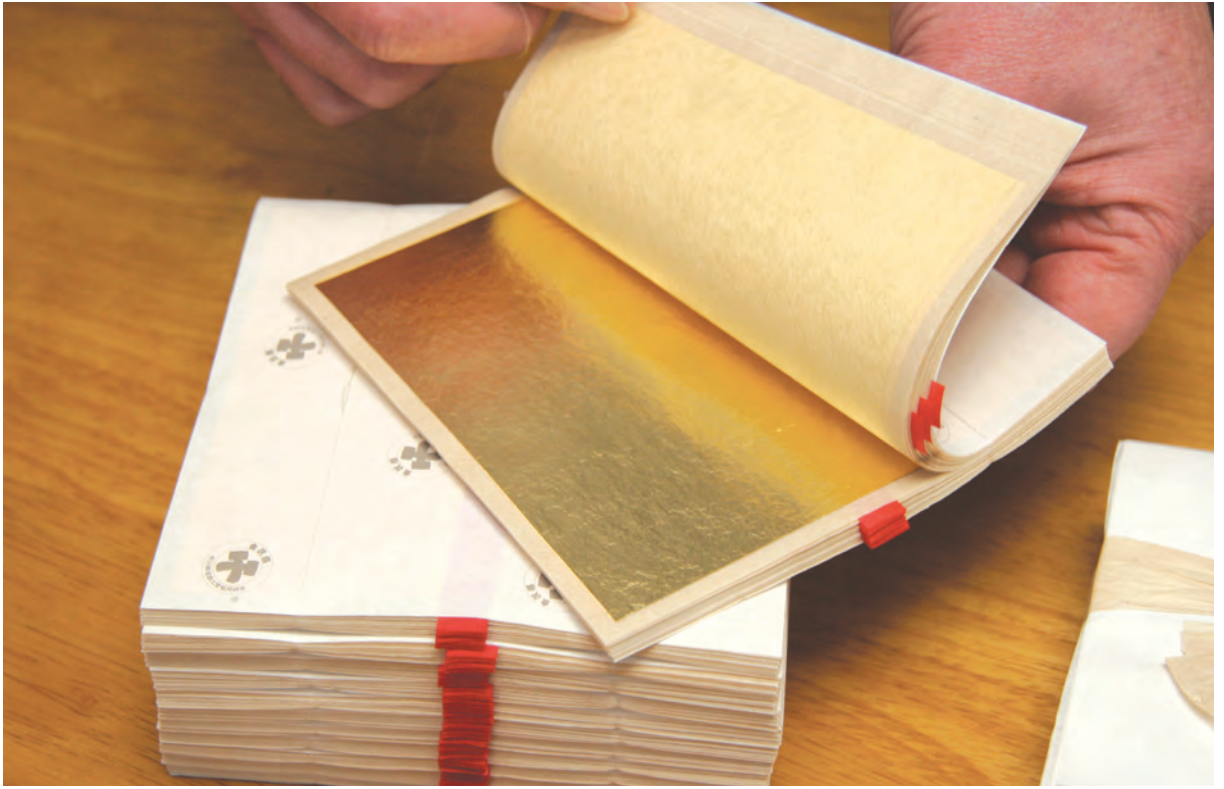
Kanazawa gold leafing is also used for the restoration of world heritage items. Approximately 200,000 sheets of Kanazawa gold leaf were used in the restoration of Kyoto's Kinkakuji Temple in 1987, and 20,000 to 30,000 sheets are used each year when the Nikko Toshogu Shrine is repaired. These world heritage properties literally glitter because of the Kanazawa culture that gave birth to high-quality gold leafing through the leafing technology passed down through the generations in Kanazawa.



Pumping Work



Craftwork Using Kanazawa Gold Leaf



Application of Leafing

-Kanazawa lacquer ware

The major characteristic of Kanazawa lacquer ware are the beautiful patterns created through highly developed lacquering techniques. The foundation of this tradition was established when the third-generation domain lord Maeda Toshitsune summoned Igarashi Doho, a member of Kyoto's master lacquerer Igarashi family that served the Muromachi Shogunate, as well as Edo master craftsman Kiyomizu Kyube.

The Kanazawa lacquer ware fostered by the Kaga Domain in this manner developed into a unique combination of the elegance of aristocratic culture that inherited the mainstream of maki-e technology from the medieval period on, and the strength of the warrior culture, with "hyomon," in which scraped patterns are raised after lacquer is applied to gold or silver plating, "raden," in which shells are inlaid, "rankaku," in which white is expressed through eggshells, and other lacquer ware decorating techniques all being passed down through the generations. This technology has been passed down through masters and students of the Kaga Domain workshop and townspeople, through the Edo, Meiji, Taisho, and Showa periods until today.

In addition, Kanazawa lacquer ware is characterized by the one-by-one production of internal furnishings, tea utensils, etc., as artistic handicraft rather than mass-produced goods. Most of the artisans currently involved are lacquerers, and there is a need to develop wood workers in the future.



Lacquering Work



Kanazawa Lacquer Ware

-Kaga-yuzen silk dyeing

The origins of Kaga-yuzen silk dyeing can be traced to the Muromachi Period, in the Kaga region's unique Umezome dyeing technique which uses materials from plum trees. Subsequently, Akaomezome, Kuromezome, and Kaga Kempo-zome became predominant as the dyeing techniques of the Kaga Domain in addition to color patterns, eventually becoming the source for later dyeing technologies. In approximately 1712, Miyazaki Yuzensai, who had been active in Kyoto as a fan painter and a kimono pattern designer, moved to Kanazawa and established the foundation of Yuzen silk dyeing.



Kaga-yuzen silk dyeing

Artisans carry out the entire process manually in multiple steps, beginning with the creation of the design. A characteristic of this process is coloration on a base created from what are often called the five colors of Yuzen (cochineal, ocher, dark green, indigo, and Tyrian purple), to give life to picturesque expressions of grass and flowers, rural scenes, and places of interest, in a strong yet calm and refined tone. In coloring as well, a unique, high-contrast method utilizing combinations of complementary colors, and a method called "mushikui" that depicts worm-eaten leaves, are both used for the skillful presentation of natural beauty born of observation, and have impact as accents. The realistic patterns of grass and flowers, incorporating the style of the Kano school, are a contrast to the highly designed style of Kyo-yuzen.

Because the steps of the process are not as divided as those of Kyo-yuzen, Kaga-yuzen is unsuited for mass production, but because a consistent production method can be used, the artist's individuality can be sufficiently expressed, pushing to the front the depth of the main dyeing that is finished with "Yuzen-nagashi," a winter tradition in Kanazawa, in which the dyed cloth is washed in a river to remove paste and excess dye. The process requires clean, flowing water which removes the paste, leaving thin white lines that increase the beauty of Kaga-yuzen silk dyeing.

Kaga-yuzen silk dyeing has received high appraisal from recent postmodern enthusiasts of the "real thing," attaining a brand value higher than that of Kyo-yuzen and performing solidly amidst unfavorable economic conditions. While Kyo-yuzen and other styles were rushing headlong to mass production, Kaga-yuzen was establishing the "artist's signature system," an integrated production system through the artists, initiating truly original production with a highly cultural nature. There are currently approximately 50 artists and 200 successors and assistants involved. Kaga-yuzen's peak sales came in 1997, when it recorded 18 billion yen. Currently, the Kaga-yuzen silk dyeing techniques are being applied to the development of interior products as well.



coloring



Yuzen-nagashi at Asano River

-Kanazawa Kutani porcelain

The origins of Kanazawa Kutani porcelain can be traced to 1806, during the rule of 11th-generation domain lord Maeda Narinaga, when the Kaga Domain brought Aoki Mokubei, a potter famous as the head of the kilns at the Shorenin Temple in Kyoto, to the domain as a technician for the purpose of reviving Kutani porcelain approximately 150 years after the Ko-kutani kilns had been closed. The following year (1807), Mokubei became the head of the Kasugayama kiln. The porcelain created in Mokubei's kiln included items following the celadon, red-gold, Sunkoroku, Nanban, Koryo, Ninsei, and other styles, as well as those invented by Mokubei himself. After Mokubei left Kanazawa, Kaga Domain samurai Takeda Shuhei opened the Minzan kiln, and created the original Akae Kutani porcelain.



Kanazawa Kutani porcelain

Kanazawa Kutani is characterized by miniature painting, the use of high-viscosity paint, and its unique red colors. The red-gold, gold-painting, flowers, and detailed brushwork for fine characters found on the work give it a sense of elegance and refinement. Kutani's main attraction, its vibrant designs, have continued to be created anew over the years, and there are many artists active in each style.

-Kaga embroidery

Kaga embroidery was brought from Kyoto as a decorative technique for cloths placed in front of tablets for the deceased, ceremonial attire for monks, etc., with the spread of Buddhism to the Kaga region at the beginning of the Muromachi Period. In the feudal period, Kaga embroidery was used on battle surcoats and adornments, etc., for domain lords, as well as for the clothing of ladies of the aristocracy. Moreover, in conjunction with the development of Yuzen silk dyeing, a higher level of technique was required to bring out the dyed patterns, and with the solid patronage it received from the domain lord, who emphasized and promoted culture and scholarship, "Kaga embroidery" attained a unique level of development and perfection rivaling that of "Kaga gold leaf" and "Kaga-yuzen."

Kaga embroidery is characterized by the use of silk, gold, and silver thread to create patterns that look three-dimensional, painstakingly implementing delicate technology stitch by stitch, each creation being highly cherished as one of a kind.

In addition, in recent years, Kaga embroidery has been used on a variety of daily sundries, tapestries, etc.

Moreover, the battle surcoat said to have been embroidered by Maeda Toshiie's wife Matsu, was restored by the Ishikawa Kaga Embroidery Cooperative, just as NHK's historical drama "Toshiie and Matsu" was being broadcast, garnering much attention. The restoration of the battle surcoat began with dyeing the thread with plants, then gorgeous Kaga embroidery was done on the front and on the back.



Kaga embroidery

-Kanazawa Buddhist home altars

In Kanazawa, the Jodo Shinshu (Ikko) sect of Buddhism, which promotes the placement of a principal image in each home, sunk its roots into the lives of the common people through the proselytizing of the monk Rennyō, resulting in a much higher demand for home altars than other regions in Japan. The artisans who assumed the mantle passed down from the master craftsmen who had been summoned from Edo and Kyoto to the workshop established by the third-generation domain lord Maeda Toshitsune and subsequently built the foundation for artistic handicraft, were the ones who responded to this demand.



Kanazawa Buddhist home altars

Because Buddhist home altars are primarily patterned after the main halls of Buddhist temples, a variety of woodworking and other craft techniques are utilized fully in their production. In particular, in Kanazawa, the production of home altars was divided between wood workers, painters, lacquerers, engravers, fitting workers, etc., and because Kanazawa was also home to the production of gold leafing, a high-level lacquering technique based on the tradition of Kanazawa lacquer ware, and using an abundance of gold leafing, was implemented to give the Kanazawa Buddhist home altar a stately and elegant appearance.



working process

The demand for home altars has declined in recent years, so altar makers have combined the altar with multi-purpose space, producing a "Karakuri altar" which uses cams and rods to make it possible to rotate the altar. By rotating it, a single altar can be made to serve two different functions, one more example of the development of a product suited to today's lifestyle. A database is also being newly created for photographs of traditional home altars produced in the Edo Period and other pre-modern times, making it possible to view them at any time.

Next, let us take a look at some Kanazawa's representative arts and crafts not legally designated in relation to the promotion of Japan's traditional craft industry.

-Kaga inlaying

Kaga inlaying is a metal decoration method used for sword accouterments, etc. and is a skill vital to warrior clans. The Maeda Clan worked to implement the technology as well, with second-generation domain lord Maeda Toshinaga summoning Goto Takujo, the originator of Kyoto metalworking, to the domain at the beginning of the Edo Period. Moreover, the technique was not merely given root, but a system for administering the metalwork of the Kaga Domain was established as an institutional requirement, and inlay technology became highly developed in Kanazawa.

In particular, saddle stirrups decorated with Kaga inlaying that coupled a flat inlay technique in which the bottom of grooves for inserting gold and silver materials is carved slightly wider to prevent peeling regardless of the strength of impact, with an ingenious and elegant design, garnered incomparable distinction.

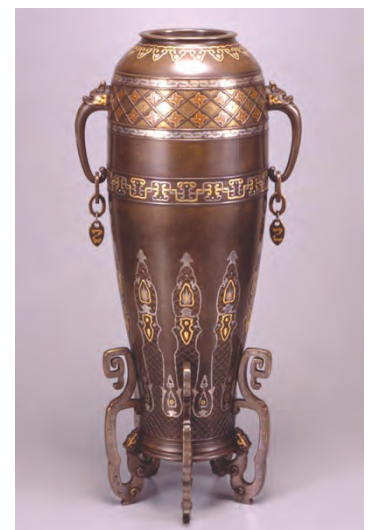
Moreover, Kaga inlaying is valued as an artistic handicraft not only inside Japan, but ever since the first time Japan took part in the World Exposition (1871 in Vienna), it has gained worldwide fame, and excellent pieces can be found in museums around the world.



Stirrups decorated with Kaga inlaying

For example, the right photograph shows a famous bronze vase consisting of the main barrel, two handles, and five legs, made by Kaga inlaying master craftsman Yamakawa Koji through a fusion of superior technique and design. The vase was presented to the wife of General Ulysses S. Grant of the United States by the Emperor Meiji, and is currently housed in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C.

The first Yamakawa Koji was born in Kanazawa in 1828, and is known as a master craftsman of such skill that he is called the "Somin of Kaga." At the command of the Meiji government, he completed a piece for exhibition at the Vienna World Exposition, and at the 1876 Philadelphia World Exposition he entered a copper piece that was awarded a prize.



Vase Ringed with Gold and Silver Inlay

(Somin, the most famous chasing master in the middle of the Edo period)

-Ohi ware

Ohi ware began as a type of Raku ceramics that originated with master ceramist Chozaemon, the highest pupil of 4th master of Raku-Ichinyu, who accompanied Sen Soshitsu Senso, the fourth-generation Urasenke tea master, when he was summoned from Kyoto by fifth-generation domain lord Maeda Tsunanori in 1666. Chozaemon found suitable soil in the village of Ohi, and under Senso's guidance, produced tea utensils expressing a simple austerity through the application of swirl patterns, wavy patterns, and other patterns to powerful and elegant shapes.

The main characteristics of Ohi ware is the unique style of firing in which the shape is formed by hand, carving off excess bits with a spatula without using a potter's wheel. During the firing stage, the piece is glazed and placed in the kiln. The temperature is increased sharply over a short period of time, then

the piece is removed and cooled rapidly. The amber-colored glaze makes the vibrant green of tea stand out, unlike the black or red firing of the Kyoto Raku style.

Since then, this method has been handed down to each successive generation for the production of Ohi ware in the domain lord's kiln. Production of Ohi ware experienced a slowdown after the Meiji Restoration when it was required to convert to private business, and circumstances were complicated by the concurrent fading of the tea ceremony. It later regained prominence, however, with the revival of the tea ceremony, and under the current master, the 10th Ohi Chozaemon (Toshiro) (Person of Cultural Merits / honorary citizen of Kanazawa/member of the Japan Art Academy), Ohi ware has become well known not only in the world of the tea ceremony, but throughout the general public as well. In Today, Raku, which has a history stretching back to the Edo Period, is represented only by Kyoto's Raku family and Kanazawa's Ohi ware, with Ohi ware garnering high assessment nationwide.



Ohi ware

-Kaga fishing flies

The method of making Kaga fishing flies developed from sweetfish fishing, which was promoted by the Kaga Domain as a privilege of the samurai so that they could get to know the lay of the land as part of military administration. In other words, to attract the attention of sweetfish in the water, precise techniques were employed in a variety of manners to manipulate feathers to express the form and iris color of insects that were appropriate to the time and place. Currently, this delicate technique is being used for the production of corsages and other colorful items.

-Kaga mizuhiki

Mizuhiki is a unique Japanese ceremonial package string used to tie money-gift envelopes and gifts. One characteristic of Kanazawa's mizuhiki workmanship is the beauty of the full, unbroken shape. In addition to the function of decoratively tying the package, part of Kanazawa mizuhiki's personality is its ability to function as a flexible formation material. It is a traditional technique that cannot be left out of ceremonial occasions such as the giving of betrothal gifts, etc., and continues to live in modern life.



Kaga Fishing Flies



Corsage



Mizuhiki

-Local Folk Toys

In addition, local folk toys reflect the folkways of their region, displaying workmanship in favorite toys that have been imbued with the faith and wishes for good luck of the common folk, but they are also significant in their role as convenient souvenirs for tourists, with the more popular items being industrialized, leading to further development. The most artful local folk toy in Kanazawa, the "lion head," is a miniature version of the giant lion head used in the Edo Period lion dance that was promoted as a type of martial arts training. The head is made of white paulownia wood, with horns and teeth covered in gold leafing, and vermillion paint decorating the inside of the mouth and nostrils, effectively evoking a sense of splendor even in something so small. Such toys that also include a peony and arabesque waistcoat made with Yuzen silk dyeing, give off a sense of luxuriousness.



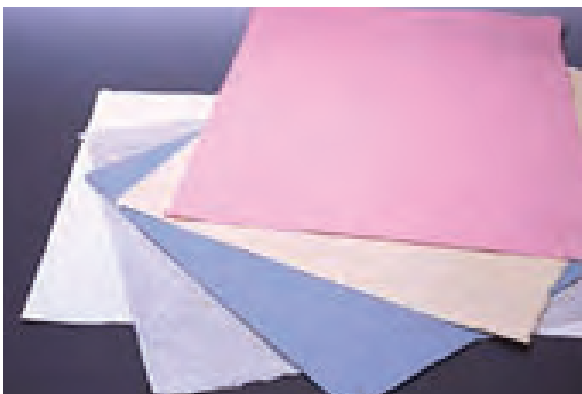
Local Folk Toy (Lion Head)



Traditional Japanese Lion Dance

-Futamata Japanese paper

Futamata Japanese paper was created in the Futamata area, just into the mountains from the City of Kanazawa, as official writing paper for the domain government during the Edo Period. Futamata developed as the site for production of Kaga's Japanese paper including hoshogami, danshi, and other paper for public documents, under the patronage of the domain government, rising to the top in both quantity and quality. The paper is currently in demand as high-quality Japanese paper, and a variety of new products have appeared, including business cards and letter sets.



letter set



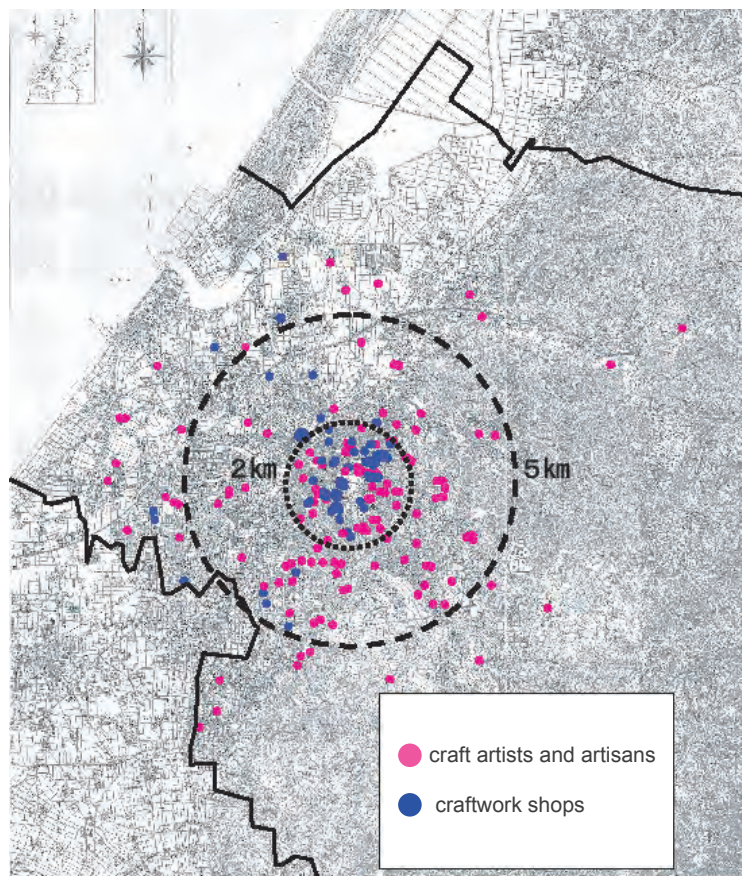
business card

-The characteristics of Kanazawa's traditional crafts

The characteristics of Kanazawa's traditional crafts can be summed up in the following three points.

- 1) The advanced designs, techniques, etc., developed in Kyoto were introduced and combined with the traditional materials and technology of the Kaga region, while at the same time carving out an original field, eventually becoming more highly valued than Kyoto, and finally gaining the current status as Japan's representative craftsmanship.
- 2) There is a distinctive Kaga style which developed with the support of the Kaga Maeda Clan, combining the pomp and glamour of the warrior culture with a subtlety born of the deep historical faith of the townspeople in the temple townships, etc.
- 3) Up to the present day, artistic craftwork has been active in the daily lives of Kanazawa's citizens, not only improving the quality of life, but also giving play to the spirit of artistic production and craftsmanship in contemporary industry as well.

Further, as can be seen from the following diagram, the craft artists and artisans, and craftwork shops that support Kanazawa's traditional crafts that have these characteristics are concentrated in the center of the city, with 60% located in the castle town region within an approximately 2km radius around the site of Kanazawa Castle, and 90% within a 5km radius.



<Figure> Local Craftworkers and Craftwork Shops