



# **IV. Kanazawa's Creative Economy**

## **(1)The role of craftwork in a creative economy**

As has been explained, Kanazawa's creative economy is facilitated by a unique cultural mode of production that was built on the development of an artistic production system from the Edo Period, and the spirit of craftwork and artistic production extends a range of influence on Kanazawa's contemporary industries. The following is a description of this cultural mode of production, including examples.

### **(Development of endogenous companies)**

The foundation for the development of Kanazawa's machine industry from the time of the Meiji Restoration on, was the craftwork promoted by the Kaga Domain during the Edo Period. From among the master craftsmen involved with the cams and rods technology that was popular in the latter part of the Edo Period as well, came pioneers who opened new roads, including in the development of the automatic loom that led to the flourishing of the textile industry, such as the aforementioned Tsudakoma Corporation. The skill and know-how of Edo Period artisans have been innovated and applied to modern industry as it has developed.

Moreover, the artisan spirit that resided in the artistic production of traditional crafts and the accumulation of the regional technology that resulted from its development, have been passed down to new urban industries as well, and the high-tech industries that have been supported by artisans who pioneered high-tech, are the true players of the leading role in Kanazawa's contemporary economy. At the same time, Kanazawa is home to many niche-top companies whose strength is not in mass production but is rather in high-mix, low-volume production and high-touch products that closely meet the needs of the consumer.

The case of personal computer peripheral device manufacturer and national brand I-O Data Device, Inc., is representative of this type of high-tech venture business in Kanazawa.

The founder established the company in 1976, using the garage of his house as the factory, after spending time at a local company that was a trailblazer for a domestic computer company, then at the Kanazawa Institute of Technology engaged in developmental research related to computers. The company established its business through the development of a textile operation monitoring system for textile factories, a core industry of the region. As soon as the company utilized its own methods to develop and market an expanded RAM board in 1984, they were suddenly hit with a flood of demand, and the I-O bank method, the company's original technology, became the standard for RAM boards, allowing the company to take the top share of the market. As computers became more prevalent, The founder noticed the gap between software that was being developed and memory capacity, and spurred on by the artisan spirit, succeeded in skillfully and rapidly finding a space with peripheral devices that major manufacturers were unable to enter. Currently, the company's main products are memory expansion boards, storage media, and LCD displays, but recently they have developed an MP3 player to play music recorded as data, as well as a network media player, a OneSeg tuner, and other products, expanding their product line into new areas.

Yagi Corporation, which moved from the textile industry to the field of fashion uniforms, has utilized catalog marketing to improve performance, and has developed their own brand products, now holding the top share in the industry. The owner of the company studied industrial design at the Kanazawa College of Art, and upon graduation was employed by an electronics company, handling catalog marketing, making it possible for him to see the possibilities of such marketing techniques. The company focused on uniforms, a stable product, specializing in this niche industry, making uniforms more fashionable and high-touch, ultimately seeing great success. Moreover, by fusing the spirit of artisanship with high-tech, the company became the first in the uniform industry to implement a CAD/CAM system for unified computer management of the process from design to cutting, and has built a flexible logistics system that enables them to respond with high-mix, small-lot, short-cycle production. Yagi Corporation has also implemented a system of collecting and recycling used products, and was quick to begin development of products for the disabled and care of the elderly, utilizing a universal design.

The artisan spirit that has been cultivated by traditional crafts is also alive in Kanazawa's unique food industry and related companies that have supported the traditional food culture.

During the high economic growth period, many sake makers utilized mass production and mass sales to increase their national share, but the decline in the quality of their products alienated consumers from Japanese sake. By contrast, sake brewer Fukumitsuya in Kanazawa, which boasts a 380-year tradition and is the top sake manufacturer in Ishikawa prefecture, was able to maintain the quality of their product through producing sake themselves and utilizing high-mix low-volume production to provide a variety of new products that met the needs of the consumer. In addition, the company was able to continue the traditional flavor while at the same time moving forward with a strategy of innovating that tradition. In addition to succeeding in shipping all product and engaging in authentic brewing, the company has implemented a "multi-brand" policy as a proactive approach to consumer behavior through multiple brands with distinct concepts.

Thus, the creative spirit of traditional crafts is alive in sake-making, and results in innovative technology being used in combination with traditional techniques, which involve careful work carried out by hand - not mass production. This spirit is not limited to sake-making, it also thrives in other industries in the region.

Shibuya Kogyo, Co., Ltd., holder of the top nationwide share of bottling systems, and a core company of Kanazawa's high-tech field, originally manufactured brewing machinery, and can be viewed as a mechatronics company that has been fostered by traditional industry. The company began development of an automatic bottling system. By instilling literally "a la carte" work, which had differing specifications for each user, with the "tradition of Kanazawa's artisan spirit," the company was able to obtain its current 60% share of the domestic market in the field. The company has also aggressively moved into new fields, starting OEM production of dialysis machines, taking a waste processing plant for businesses from test production to the mass production stage, and aiming for new development into the environmental and medical fields on the foundation of their



Shibuya Kogyo, Co., Ltd  
Automatic Bottling System

Takakuwa Art Printing Co., Ltd. turned its focus toward multicolored labels for refined sake, which have a high level of added value, even to the point of applying gold, printing labels for Kanazawa's local sake manufacturers, subsequently taking the sense of design and technology it had built up to eventually acquire approximately 50% of nationwide label printing orders, the top share in the industry. Currently, the company has expanded to comprehensive sales, from packaging to marketing. Further, the company has established a planning and development division to create computer guidebooks and other publications with a high sense of design and aesthetics in an aim for higher added value. In addition, beginning in 1995, Takakuwa has taken part in business related to the "New Ishikawa Information Archive," a digital archive of the traditional arts and crafts of Ishikawa Prefecture, and has been highly praised for its high-resolution images and strength of design.



Takakuwa Art Printing Co., Ltd.  
Label Printing

Also, many manufacturers that use high-mix low-volume production, making them leaders of what is literally “artisan production in a high-tech era”, boast the top share in their individual markets nationwide. For example, when conveyor machinery manufacturer Ishino Seisakusyo Co., Ltd. began producing revolving sushi bar conveyors in 1974, the company became the top manufacturer in the industry with the development of an automatic tea dispenser and a sushi robot. The flexible thinking and solid technology of the company's sushi bar conveyor with automatic tea dispenser has enabled it to acquire a 60% share of the domestic and overseas markets. In this manner, the food-related machine industry that developed from the artisan spirit residing in Kanazawa has opened up possibilities for the further development of local venture companies handling software and systems.



Ishino Seisakusyo Co., Ltd. Sushi Bar Conveyor with Automatic Tea Dispenser

The fact that these companies were organically connected in their development is another significant feature of Kanazawa's creative economy. In short, the textile industry and the textile machine industry mutually supported each other, while the metal, sewn materials manufacturing, printing, and other urban industries grew through local small and medium-sized companies. Then that technology and know-how was inherited by modern industries that pioneered high-tech, resulting in a variety of niche-top companies. For example, the aforementioned I-O Data Device, Inc. is a spin out from major endogenous office computer manufacturer PFU Limited, and expanded from the development of systems for textiles factories, one of Kanazawa's core industries, to become the holder of the top share of the PC peripheral device market. This type of organic connection between companies in the region not only provides a synergistic effect to each of the industries, but has also led to the conversion to new fields, a diversification of the industry structure, and even the stability of the region's economy. Moreover, the viability of these endogenous companies has suppressed large-scale exogenous development of industry, allowing Kanazawa to avoid rapid transformation of its industry and city structures, thereby circulating income from outside the region inside the region, and directing it toward new cultural investment and cultural consumption. In reality, Kanazawa's total per-capita wholesale and retail commodity sales amount is 1.5 times the national average of 4.2 million yen at 6.5 million yen, indicating the vitality of transactions within the region.

### **(Cultural investment and cultural consumption)**

In Kanazawa, in addition to governmental cultural policy, a variety of private businesses are actively engaging in cultural investment as well.

Standing at the front of such activity, new business leaders began producing the nationally acclaimed endogenous event Foodpia Kanazawa in 1985. Cultured people from all over Japan are invited to this event, providing a good occasion for exchange with regional people. It is more than just food culture of Kanazawa that is presented here, the event is the perfect setting for talks about arts and crafts, modern art and the like. Held each winter, when ingredients are plentiful, the event is a success due to the ability of the cultural figures and scholars who gather from throughout Japan to transmit information, not only increasing tourism during the slack winter season, but also having economic impact by revitalizing Kanazawa's economy through awakening regional identity. It is truly "an event in which culture promotes economic activity."

Other companies are actively engaging in cultural investment as well. Nakamura Brewery Co., Ltd., has been actively supporting the handicraft industry, and donated the residence of the late president of the company and artistic handicraft to the City of Kanazawa as the foundation of the Kanazawa Nakamura Memorial Museum.

Further, soy sauce companies in Ono, with a history extending back to the Edo Period, have begun urban development activities with the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, utilizing unused soy sauce warehouses. In 1998, the first empty warehouse was remodeled into Moromigura, a gallery and coffee shop, and two years later the second soy sauce warehouse was remodeled into the Creative Workshop Oxydol, inviting three young artists who had graduated from the Kanazawa College of Art. The shining dark brown beams and columns, soaked in soy sauce, inspire the artists, and the workshop has at the same time become a place of social gathering for area residents. Efforts are also being made to transmit regional culture to future generations, including the establishment of the Ono Benkichi Karakuri Museum in commemoration of versatile genius Ono Benkichi who was active in Ono. He made furniture such as tables, wooden boxes, etc., and was well known as a master craftsman of the cams and rods technology at the end of the Edo Period.

Moreover, regional established shops have independently worked to transmit and vitalize the traditional culture of the region, holding events such as Yuzen-nagashi demonstrations, which is a step of the production process of Kaga-Yuzen silk dyeing, as well as the Asanogawa Garden Party. Each spring for over twenty years, the garden party has been held along the banks of the Asano River, and has established itself as a familiar spring event for Kanazawa's citizens.

On the other hand, from the standpoint of consumption as well, consumers who enjoy goods and services with abundant cultural nature and artistic qualities have allowed the consumer market to see improved quality, and have stimulated the cultural mode of production.

This is evident in the indexes as well, with Kanazawa's per capita taxable income at the national municipal average of approximately 1.4 million yen, with the per capita yearly retail sales amount at approximately 1.3 million yen, 1.3 times the national average. Even with consumer income at the same level, commodity sales amounts are above the national average, indicating the higher quality of products.

One event that succeeded in Kanazawa's high-quality consumer market that demands a high level of cultural nature and artistic qualities is the La Folle Journee Kanazawa "Days of Enthusiasm" Music Festival 2008. La Folle Journee is France's largest classical music festival, held each year in Nantes. It has also been held outside France, in Lisbon, Portugal beginning in 2000, in Bilbao, Spain beginning in 2002, and in Tokyo, Japan beginning in 2005. In April 2008, Kanazawa joined this group to hold a three-day festival under the theme of "Beethoven and His Friends," welcoming top musicians from France, Germany, Spain, and other countries throughout the world. Attendance far exceeded expectations at approximately 85, 000 people.



La Folle Journee Kanazawa 2008

### **(Development of new creative industries)**

With this type of cultural mode of production, in addition to the conventional high-tech industry and mechatronics industry, the content industry and other new creative industries are being born. One example is Takakuwa Art Printing Co., Ltd. In recent years, the company has opened a media laboratory and a creative laboratory to promote website creation and program planning and production for BS digital broadcasts, and has implemented and begun operation of a state-of-the-art image editing system, moving fully into the multimedia content field.

Further, private businesses and government have come together since 1997 to host eAT KANAZAWA, a festival for digital creators, in an effort to create new cultural value in the digital network society. Each year, top electronic artists are welcomed from around the world to hold forums, seminars, and award ceremonies, etc., with a variety of participants crossing languages and borders to gather and associate in Kanazawa. Collaboration between traditional crafts and other local industries and cutting-edge technology facilitates the development not only of the digital field, but of new industries as well.

## **(2)Public-private partnership for Development of creative city**

The City of Kanazawa is already moving forward with the development of a creative city, with the business world, citizens, and the government joining hands to unite public and private in the effort. Among these efforts is Kanazawa's Creative City strategy that has been discussed and developed by the Kanazawa Creative City Conference that was started by the Kanazawa Association of Corporate Executives with a call to Kanazawa's citizens. The Kanazawa Creative City Conference is an innovative style of round table conference held every other year since 2001 by Kanazawa to provide a forum to pursue the ideal model of cities in the 21st century from a global standpoint and to formulate and experiment with new city policy.

The Kanazawa Creative City Conference began in 1997 as part of the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Kanazawa Association of Corporate Executives. Economic players put the profit and loss of their businesses to the side and worked to create unique, high-level urban policy from a long-term point of view. Kanazawa has a long history of activities designed to increase the city's creativity, which have been taking place for more than ten years.

The first conference was held in 2001 with the theme "Learning from Memory," taking a look back at the history and tradition of Kanazawa as a city, and discussing "the memory of cities and the creative power of humans." The creation of the Kanazawa Society was proposed to continue the outstanding individuality of Kanazawa into the new century and further refine it.

With that, the first meeting of the Kanazawa Society was held in 2002, at which a proposal was made for a city rejuvenation plan based on the concept of "beautiful Kanazawa," and it was confirmed that the Creative City Conference and the Kanazawa Society would be hosted every other year for ten years to verify that social experiment. In other words, it was determined to approach it as a biennial art exhibition.

The theme of the third Creative City Conference in 2005 was "Creating Value in City Heritage." Three working sessions were held on the themes "Using the City's Heritage," "Performing the City's Heritage," and "Stimulation of the City's Heritage," for the purpose of discussing measures to utilize creatively not only the cultural inheritance preserved historically by the city, but the heritage of the bubble economy and the heritage of modern industry. In conjunction with these activities, reports were given on lighting up the city in a manner fitting for Kanazawa, open cafes in the central urban district, and other social experiments.

The third meeting of the Kanazawa Society was held in 2006 under the theme "The Attraction of Cities." The importance of rediscovering and communicating the attractiveness of the City of Kanazawa, while at the same time foreseeing both the positive and negative effects of the opening of the Hokuriku Shinkansen bullet train line that is planned for 2014, were confirmed, and emergency measures were proposed for the preservation of Japanese-style inns which were in danger, in order to preserve a flavor and atmosphere suited to Kanazawa.



At the 4th meeting of the Creative City Conference that was held last year under the theme "Competition between Cities," collaboration between cities in the predicted heightening of competition to invite creative individuals from around the world, was discussed, and proposals were made to establish the view of Kanazawa as one of the world's Creative Cities, from the new viewpoints of "Singing of Kanazawa, Seeing Kanazawa, Playing in Kanazawa."

Prominent urban researchers, cultural figures, local business leaders, citizens, and government leaders such as the mayor of the City of Kanazawa, attended the conference as members of the executive committee, and overall efforts toward the creation of a Creative City were promoted based on the results of social experiments and a wide-ranging discussion. Application to the Creative Cities Network sponsored by UNESCO is a significant new step for the Kanazawa Creative City Conference toward the creation of a City of Crafts and Folk Art through collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Moreover, the Kanazawa Creative City Promotion Committee, consisting of members of government and craft organizations, business groups, and citizen groups, was organized to work on the recent application to be designated a City of Crafts. In October 2008, the committee held "World Creative City Forum 2008 in Kanazawa", an event to which guest speakers were invited from cities belonging to UNESCO's Creative Cities Network: Santa Fe (folk art), Berlin (design) and Bologna (music). The forum adopted the Kanazawa Agenda, according to which collaboration of public and private sectors will result in creative solutions to city problems. This forum will be held yearly, and will promote cultural exchange with UNESCO's Creative Cities through the establishment of public-private partnerships.

In particular, we will exchange information on tourism policies and products with network members including Santa Fe, designated as a city of folk art, which reported on "creative tourism", and we will develop a tourism system in collaboration with craft artists and travel agents.

Moreover, we have a public and private partnership forum with a history of more than ten years. We will further develop this forum based on past activities, and furthermore in 2010, hold the "World Craft Triennale in Kanazawa", a world craft exhibition organized by guest curators for the purpose of succession of traditional skills and technology, in conjunction with the World Creative City Forum, through which occasion we will promote public-private partnerships in various craft-related fields.