

## Sendai: Wooded Capital Of North Japan

### Date Masamune's legacy

The founder of the Date clan was a samurai from central Honshu who accompanied the shogun Minamoto Yoritomo in a campaign against the northern branch of the Fujiwara family in Hiraizumi (present-day Iwate Prefecture). As a reward for his faithful service, this samurai was granted a fief in Fukushima Prefecture and allowed to take the name Date as his family name. The Date remained a small local clan until the 16th century when they began to steadily expand their fief through military take-overs and a series of strategic marriages.

Date Masamune (1567–1636) was born during the period of shifting allegiances and warfare that preceded the consolidation of power in the hands of the Tokugawa and their retainers. Masamune contracted smallpox as a child and lost the use of his right eye. Because of this, his mother, a woman of great beauty, preferred his more handsome younger brother and hoped he would succeed to the family leadership. She is reputed to have tried to have Masamune, nicknamed the "One-Eyed Dragon," poisoned. He survived, however, and subsequently eliminated his brother from contention.

Upon becoming clan leader, Masamune exhibited his skills as both warrior and administrator—and his good sense in choosing to ally himself with Toyotomi Hideyoshi and later with Tokugawa Ieyasu. As a reward for his loyalty at the great battle at Sekigahara in 1600, Ieyasu gave Masamune an enlarged fief and permission to build a great manor house.

Masamune chose a site on a hill overlooking the fertile Miyagino Plain with a distant view of the Pacific Ocean. The extensive castle grounds stretched out along the west bank of the Hirose River with the central buildings strategically located on the edge of a deep ravine. Undoubtedly Ieyasu was already beginning his scheme of "letting" local rulers expend their energies and money on the construction of expensive castle keeps and residences, while keeping a careful eye out to be sure that they did not construct too defensible a castle. Masamune was powerful enough to not be allowed to build a towering keep, but he was smart enough to make use of every topographical advantage to ensure his security.

It took Masamune's conscripted labor force ten years to build the great walls and the elegant residences within. He named the castle *Aobajo* (the Green Leaf Castle). To support the many needs of the administrative center west of the river, Masamune had a town built on the

east bank. Like most castle-towns, this new community, named Sendai, was divided into quarters for each subdivision of the artisan, merchant, and warrior classes. The name chosen for this town of 50,000 inhabitants was "Sendai," an auspicious name, whether the original characters referred to *sentai-butsu* (the thousand carved buddhas) kept in a temple nearby or to *sen-dai* (the thousand generations) which the town would surely exist. The current characters for the name are of more modern origin.

Through Masamune's administrative skills and careful compromising with the Tokugawa, the new center of political power, economic activity, and culture flourished. Indeed, it could be said that Sendai is what it is today as a result of Date Masamune's great enterprise.

### Envoy to Spain and Rome

There is another, somewhat more romantic, certainly more tragic, figure in Sendai's history—Hasekura Tsunenaga, the main character in Shusaku Endo's historical novel, *The Samurai*. Hasekura was commissioned by Masamune, who seems to have been willing to at least overlook, if not actively encourage, the activities of Christian missionaries within his domain, to travel to Spain in hopes of establishing trade and to Rome to request that Pope Paul V send more missionaries to Japan.

Unfortunately, between the time Hasekura set out on this tremendously arduous journey in 1613 and the time he reached Rome two years later, reports of the suppression and persecution of Christians in Japan had reached the Pope's ears through other channels. Although the Vatican apparently received Hasekura's mission warmly, the Pope was not inclined to accede to the request for more priests. Hasekura, doubtlessly dejected, set out on the return voyage via Mexico, arrived

in Japan in 1620, and virtually disappeared from history.

### Center of Tohoku

Sendai today is the political, cultural, educational, and economic center of Miyagi Prefecture and the major metropolis for the five prefectures which comprise Tohoku, northern Honshu. With its own deep-water port and harbor facilities at nearby Shiogama and Ishinomaki, Sendai is located near the most important facilities on the Pacific side of Tohoku. Located midway between Tokyo and Aomori on the Japan National Railways Tohoku Main Line, the Tohoku Shinkansen, and the Tohoku Expressway, it is an important center for the distribution of marine products and food staples from all over Tohoku. The Shinkansen now connects Sendai with Tokyo in only one hour and 53 minutes. Sendai is linked by air with major cities throughout the country.

Known as *mori no miyako* (the wooded capital), Sendai, despite momentary lapses, has maintained its natural loveliness throughout its growth into a modern metropolis. The main east-west avenues are lined with *keyaki* (zelkova) and other trees which provide a pleasant respite from the rush of urban life. The Hirose River is a pleasant, clean stream which provides soothing environs for birdwatcher, fisherman, and picnicker alike, all within a 20-minute walk of the center of town. Sendai may not be known for its unique character or traditional culture, but, in contrast to the dreariness and cramped feeling of many other Japanese cities, it is a very pleasant place to live.

Home of Tohoku University, one of the most prestigious national universities, and an unusually large number of private schools, Sendai is rightfully regarded as the academic center of Tohoku. Research in virology and





other fields of medicine, metallurgy, semiconductors, and engineering attracts researchers from other parts of Japan and abroad.

## Tourist attractions

In addition to the pleasantness of the city itself, Sendai is located near a variety of popular tourist attractions. To the west, within about an hour's train ride, are an *onsen* (hot spring) town, a ski ground, and an unusual complex of temples. Sakunami Hot Springs has a wide variety of accommodations from quite traditional inns with outdoor baths to fashionable hotels with stage shows. Further on, through the tunnel into Yamagata Prefecture, is Omoshiroyama Ski Ground and Yamadera, a mountain side covered with temples founded over 1,100 years ago.

Sendai is gateway to skiing grounds on the Zao Mountain Range—three slopes on the Miyagi Prefecture side and the extensive Yamagata Zao Ski Ground on the other side of the peaks. With the Tohoku Shinkansen, new tunnels and highways, and connecting transportation, Zao offers all the skiing you could want—all on one mountain. Chosen as the site of the 1979 Interski, a gathering of ski instructors from all over the world, Zao is one of the best ski resorts in Japan.

To the east of Sendai are Shiogama, port town and site of a famous shrine devoted to the guardian deities of pregnant women and fishermen, and Matsushima, famous for the Zuiganji Temple constructed by Masamune and for its bay. Matsushima Bay, which connects Matsushima and Shiogama, is dotted with variously-shaped pine-covered islands and criss-crossed by sightseeing boats piloted by men with stories to tell about how each island got its name. Few tourists visit Sendai without making the pilgrimage to the Matsushima area. For the discriminating visitor, the visit to the temple and a boat ride to Oku-Matsushima can be a very pleasant day-trip out of Sendai.

North of Sendai, the former capital of the northern branch of the Fujiwara family at Hirazumi and the beautiful city of Morioka are also within day-trip range.

## Festivals

Every town and village in Japan has its festivals, but Sendai is known for two major annual events. For the winter visitor, the hours from mid-afternoon on January 14 until the morning of the fifteenth are a good time to visit the Osaki Hachiman Shrine in Hachiman-machi. Families bring their New Year decorations to be burned on the huge bonfire at the entrance to the shrine. The adjacent streets are blocked off to accommodate the crowds who come to inch their way up the stone stairway and then on to the shrine to pray for a safe and prosperous new year. The other attraction of the festival is the *hadaka mairi* (pilgrims), robust men and women who walk to the shrine from the center of town braving the cold in minimal attire. They deserve the privilege of

being let through the crowds straightaway.

The Tanabata (Star) Festival is celebrated in Sendai one month later than in other parts of Japan in order to coincide with the other two major summer Tohoku festivals—the Nebuta Festival in Aomori and the Kanto Festival in Akita. *Tanabata*, which celebrates the annual meeting of the weaver star and the herder star, begins with a fireworks display on the evening of August 5. The main attraction is the beautiful bamboo and paper *tanabata* decorations which are displayed throughout the day and evening of August 6, 7, and 8 in the arcades of the main shopping streets.

## The future

National, regional, prefectural, and local economic associations are currently surveying Sendai's present capacities and future possibilities for growth. There is a movement to turn Sendai into a "convention city" to host academic and business conventions. The Sixth International Virology Congress, the first ever held in Asia, was held in Sendai in September 1984 and proved that Sendai could serve well as a location for national and international assemblages. Improved tourist information, English road signs, and over 500 "goodwill guides" speaking 18 different languages indicate the city's openness to foreigners.

The city is examining the possibility of incorporating several existing communities in order to expand to a city with a population of over one million and hence become eligible for certain national government considerations. In seeking this designation, working toward extending Sendai Airport's runway to accommodate international flights and expanding facilities at Sendai Port, Sendai is moving to outgrow its reputation as a "branch office town" and to establish direct contacts with enterprises abroad. Perhaps this is the legacy of Date Masamune and Hasekura Tsunenaga at work.

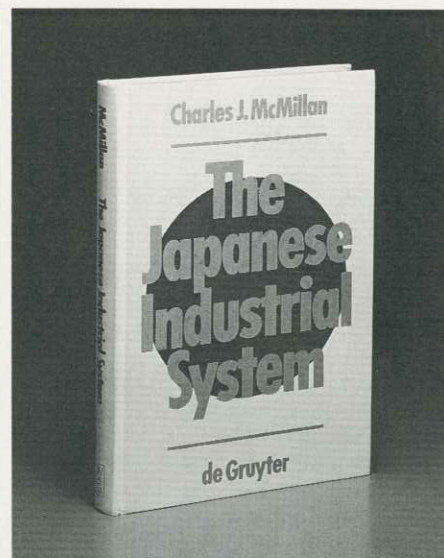
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# Bookshelf

## The Japanese Industrial System

By Charles J. McMillan  
Published by Walter de Gruyter & Co.  
1984, Berlin  
356 pages; \$29.95

*The Japanese Industrial System* is a very comprehensive and useful outline of the makeup and workings of Japanese industry,



and one with unexpected depths of meaning. The term "industrial" as used in the title is a popular adjective in numerous terms—industrial relations, industrial structure, industrial technology, industrial management, industrial policy, and industrial development to name just a few. These are important concepts in their own right, and many represent serious lines of study, but *The Japanese Industrial System* goes further than any single one of them in an ambitious attempt to define and integrate them all.

Industrial relations, for example, is a concept referring to the issues and relationships between management and labor within industrial society. The character of industrial relations determines whether there is conflict or cooperation between labor and management, whether workers stay with the same company for a long time or job-hop, how strong worker motivation is, and what the levels of productivity are. Little wonder that, in seeking to explain the strong performance of Japanese business in recent years, many people have cited the seniority-based wages, lifetime employment, and enterprise unions which characterize Japan's stable industrial relations and underlie the high labor motivation.

Yet industrial relations cannot exist in isolation, and they are largely determined by such related factors as industrial technology and production management, corporate organization and strategy, and industrial structure and government policies.

All of these components are closely bound in a web of interdependence—none can be divorced from the others. Corporate and industrial performance can only be understood within the broader context of all of these factors working together. Charles McMillan has recognized this and set himself the task of providing an integrated perspective on the totality—a challenge at which he succeeds admirably by employing a comprehensive analytical matrix merging macroeconomic and microeconomic factors with the hardware and software aspects as shown below.