

Outside Tokyo

Kanazawa: The Proud Past

Today Kanazawa is a lively, progressive and prosperous city, fully in tune with the vitality and dynamism that hums through modern Japan. But it is also a city that lives comfortably with the heritage of its proud past. The origins of Kanazawa are lost in the murky recesses of history, but certainly by the 10th century a small community had come into being on the ancient trading route known as the Hokuriku-do that ran from the capital of Kyoto to north-western Japan. Later, in the 16th century, a militant Buddhist sect chose the town as its headquarters, and the population soon numbered several thousand persons. The real growth of Kanazawa as a city, however, began with the arrival of the powerful *daimyo* lord, Maeda Toshiie, in 1583.

Descended from a minor samurai family in central Japan, Maeda Toshiie and his sons fought their way to power by skillfully allying themselves with the great unifiers of early-modern Japan, first Toyotomi Hideyoshi and then Tokugawa Ieyasu, who created the shogunate that ruled Japan from 1603 to 1868. By the time the shogunate was established, the Maeda family had extended its sway over the Hokuriku region, ruling the three ancient provinces of Kaga, Noto and Etchu, their governance legitimized by an official grant of authority issued by the shogunate. The tax income from this holding made the Maeda the second most powerful family in all of Japan, behind only the Tokugawa house itself, and they erected a large castle in Kanazawa to serve as the military headquarters for governing this vast domain. Around this fortress, the Maeda assembled their samurai retainers—some 50,000 persons in all, including wives and children. Very quickly merchants and artisans poured into the emerging city to supply the daily needs of the warriors, who by fiat were restricted to military and bureaucratic careers, and by 1700 the city's population stood at nearly 125,000 persons. This made Kanazawa a world-class city, rivaling in size such illustrious European cities as Rome, Amsterdam and Madrid.

Physically, Kanazawa came to bear the marks of its military origins. The lord's castle dominated the city—its circumference measured more than two miles, and the height of its walls and towers soared some two hundred feet into the sky. The castle was designed for strength and security, but it was a work of beauty as well. The long, arching sweep of the walls lent the castle a sense of graceful permanence, while the white stucco watchtowers dramatically set off the massive turrets and gates.

Urban space was used for military ends in other ways as well. Concentric rings of moats provided additional protection for the castle;

important warrior families were told to live at strategically important locations around the city; and in the 1610s the Maeda *daimyo* forcibly moved all the temples to the outskirts of the city, where their vast worship halls could be garrisoned in time of danger.

During the 17th century what historians refer to as the great *pax Tokugawa* settled over Japan. Between 1638, when Christians and masterless samurai staged a futile but bloody revolt at Shimabara in Kyushu, and the 1850s, when the West poked its aggressive nose into north Asia, Japan was at peace, and the nation's cities began to assume a civilian as well as military character. During this time Kanazawa became especially famous for its arts and handicrafts. The Maeda family, for instance, were particularly fond of *noh* theater and patronized several famous families of actors. The tea ceremony was popular among warriors and merchants alike, and in the 1640s the Maeda invited the famous tea master Senno-Soshitsu, founder of the now world-famous Urasenke school of tea, to come to live in Kanazawa. Shortly thereafter, the Ohi family of potters arrived to produce bowls for use in the tea ceremony. Working in a different aesthetic tradition, others began to produce the more colorful and complexly patterned Kutani style of pottery. Still other artisans contributed to Kanazawa's growing fame as well. Gold leaf makers settled in the city. So, too, did Miyazaki Yuzen, who invented the world-acclaimed Yuzen dyeing techniques for silk textiles, and Igarashi Doho, head of one of the two most esteemed lacquer ware families in all of Japan, who specialized in *maki-e*, or "sprinkled lacquer," in which gold or silver powder or leaf was placed on the object before the final coats of lacquer were applied. By 1700, Kanazawa had become renowned as a center of taste

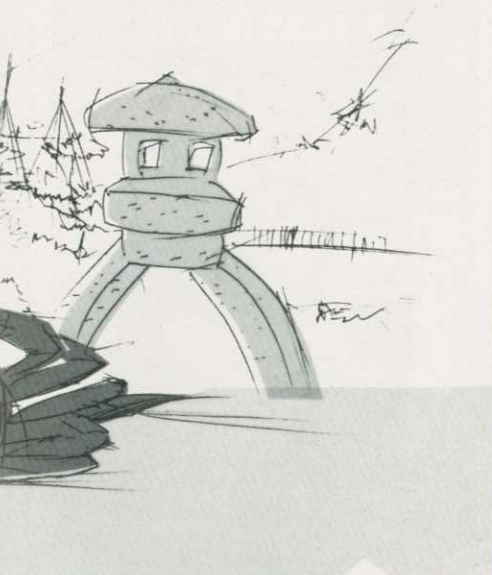
and fine craftsmanship, a reputation that the modern city maintains yet today as the descendants of many of these same artisans preserve the centuries-old family traditions.

A tourist's delight

People today come to Kanazawa for all kinds of reasons. The city is the administrative, business and educational center of the entire Hokuriku region, and its streets are thronged with store clerks, bankers, office workers and students. Despite the clamor and throb of the modern city, however, the people of Kanazawa blend the new with the old in a style that is distinctive, even in a country where visitors are constantly struck by the juxtaposition of the present and the past. As tourists, most of us will come to this former castle town on the coast of the Japan Sea to discover Japanese tradition in a setting that is still well off the beaten path even for Japanese sightseers.

There is no better introduction to Kanazawa than a walk through its charming back streets, where the atmosphere of the past is still remarkably well preserved. Fortunately, the local Tourist Information Service has prepared a colorful map, available at its office just outside the railroad station as well as at most inns and hotels, that lays out several walking tours, each of which can be covered easily in three to four hours. One favorite, the Central Course, begins at Ishikawa Gate. Originally a rear gate to the castle, this magnificent portal and the equally impressive stone walls that adjoin it have become the most frequently photographed symbols of the city's past. From here, the tour moves through a section of samurai houses, preserved in traditional style. Often enclosed by tile-roofed walls, they have a secluded feel to them, and one sometimes can





catch a glimpse, through an elaborately carved gate, of a Zen-inspired inner garden. The tour then winds past a stretch of the old moats, before concluding at Kenroku Park. Completed by the Maeda lords in the early 1800s, Kenroku is celebrated as one of Japan's three most beautiful gardens. The reputation is well deserved, for the garden combines flowering trees with the use of moss, water and open vistas in a way that both calms the soul and opens the imagination to the very special wonders of Japanese aesthetics.

A second tour that should delight most visitors is the Temple Ward Course, a stroll through the temples that were clustered together in the 1610s. With an advance reservation, one can even visit the so-called Ninja Temple, an ordinary enough looking temple from the outside, but equipped inside with emergency escape routes through secret stairwells, hidden rooms and trick doorways. This tour ends at the Kutani pottery kilns where visitors can watch the potters in action.

Observing the old crafts being made is easy in Kanazawa. Numerous small workshops dot the cityscape and delight the stroller, but the most convenient place to catch a quick look at many different crafts is the Kanko Bussan-kan, near Kenroku Park, where artisans turn out gold leaf, lacquer, pottery, Yuzen silk and other local specialties. Those especially interested in Yuzen silk can also visit the Saihitsu-an Yuzen Silk Center, where they can watch artisans apply the colorful patterns and hear an explanation of the entire 18-step process. Having seen the crafts being made, most tourists cannot resist buying some. They are sold throughout the city, but the Ishida, downtown on the main street in Katamachi, and the shops on the street between Katamachi and Kenroku Park seem to have the best selections.

The list of places to visit and things to do in Kanazawa seems endless. The Morihachi cake shop has been selling traditional-style Japanese sweets for some three hundred years, and the Nakaya family has operated its pharmacy at the same downtown location even longer, over four hundred years—and they will still mix up for you a portion of their secret formula "purple snow," a catchall remedy for the infirmities of old age. The noh theater, built by the prefectural government in 1972, presents a variety of classical dance and musical performances, with noh productions usually scheduled for Sundays. Those with a taste for tea should try to participate in the tea ceremony held on the 27th of each month in the 300-year-old tea house built under the direction of Sen-no-Soshitsu at Hasudera Temple; the memorial services for the same tea master on the 23rd of each month at Gesshinji Temple; or the memorial tea ceremony on the 17th of every month at Ryukokuji Temple for the soul of Miyazaki Yuzen. Kanazawa also abounds in wonderful museums. Three are near-musts for any visitor. The Prefectural Local History Museum is housed in a delightful Meiji-era red brick building and features a large relief map of Kanazawa as a castle town, complete with push-button lights to illustrate famous buildings and sections of the town. Nearby, the Prefectural Art Museum, designed by the internationally-known architect Yoshiro Taniguchi, mounts shows of western and Japanese art. Finally, the Honda Museum displays that family's treasures. The Hondas served as advisers to the Maeda *daimyo*, and this collection, housed on the former site of the 300-room family mansion, permits a rare glimpse into the lifestyle of the wealthy elite members of the old samurai class.

Of food and festivals

Any time is suitable for a visit to Kanazawa, but each season offers its own particular delights. Spring brings *takenoko* (bamboo shoot) cooking and, in June, on the anniversary date of Maeda Toshiie's entry into Kanazawa in 1583, the city celebrates the Hyakumangoku Festival, with an all-day tea ceremony in Kenroku Park, a geisha show and a parade around the castle by men in traditional samurai costume. The fall colors spread through Kenroku and the temple gardens in late October, and while snows are deep from January, winter appetites can feast on plump sweet shrimps, crabs and other tasty treats from the Japan Sea. Kanazawa is less than an hour from Tokyo by plane (five and a half hours by train), and rooms are plentiful, either in inns (try the Kincharyo, where the Reischauers slept) or modern hotels such as the New Tokyo. Best of all, there is a wealth of help for the English-language speaking visitor. The Kanazawa City Tourism Section in City Hall (tel. 0762-20-2194) offers information and pamphlets on just about everything, while the Hokkoku Culture Center (0762-32-1377) will arrange a personal guide for a nominal fee. Before going, be cer-

tain to get a copy of Ruth Stevens' wonderful guide book, *Kanazawa: The Other Side of Japan* (it lists the telephone numbers and locations of all sightseeing spots). Those wanting to know more about the city's history should see my *Kanazawa: A Seventeenth-Century Japanese Castle Town*. The past lives with the present in Kanazawa, creating a city that is boldly different from Tokyo, and is a fascinating introduction to life in a traditional regional setting.

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Bookshelf

Kaisha, The Japanese Corporation

By James C. Abegglen & George Stalk, Jr.
Published by Basic Books, Inc.
1985, New York
309 pages; \$14.95

There are so many books in English on the Japanese economy and Japanese business that one wonders if there really can be anything to add to the tales of Japanese management, Japan, Inc. and all the rest. Apparently there is. *Kaisha, The Japanese Corporation* by James Abegglen and George Stalk, Jr. is distinguished by its fresh perspective and the importance of its implications.

Founder of the Boston Consulting Group's Tokyo Office, Abegglen is currently director of the Graduate School of Comparative Culture at Sophia University in Tokyo. Over the 30-odd years since he introduced the uniqueness of the Japanese employment system to the world in his now-classic *The Japanese Factory*, Abegglen's understanding of Japan has grown and matured. He does not miss any of the subtle aspects of Japanese business practices that are important for a deep understanding of the *kaisha* but that may not be clear to

