

A Preliminary Literary and Cultural Investigation of Sake Brewing in Toyama Prefecture

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Abstract: This set of notes provides a concise summary of the 18 sake breweries in Toyama prefecture, Japan, focusing on profiles of the breweries and the naming of the individual sakes. The purpose of these notes is to create a base from which to introduce Toyama sake internationally from a standpoint of local cultural studies (place) and literature (language).

Keywords: Japanese sake, Toyama sake, fermentation culture, local cultural studies, sake in English

Part I: Introduction

This is a collection of research notes on local sake in Toyama prefecture. Currently, there are 18 sake breweries in Toyama; these notes introduce each one, outlining the brewery's history and major brands, and discussing the region where the brewery is located. This study is particularly concerned with the language of sake: the meanings of brewery names, product names, and sake brewing techniques. These notes will be used to create more comprehensive works to introduce the local sake of Toyama in English. The next stage of research will include interviews with breweries and sake makers as well as in-depth examinations of the language, environment, and history of sake making in Toyama.

This study approaches sake not simply as an alcoholic beverage but as a cultural product rich in literary, geographic, and historical interest. The Japanese language has a number of evocative expressions connecting sake to cultural and philosophical pursuits: the

word *suigin* (酔吟) means to get drunk and recite poetry, while *shusen* (酒仙) means to forget the cares of the world (literally, becoming a mountain hermit) while drinking sake. It is believed that this research, when complete, can provide a new kind of English “map” to Toyama prefecture, using sake as the point of departure to discover a hidden Toyama and a new Japan.

Each brewery listing is followed by *keywords for further investigation* and *terms for etymological/literary investigation*. These will provide the basis for further examination of the topic. Part III contains a compilation of essential information on Toyama sake breweries in English.

Part II: A list of sake breweries in Toyama prefecture with notes for further inquiry

1 Masuda Brewery (栴田酒造店)

Toyama prefecture, Toyama city, Higashi-iwase machi 269

Telephone: 076-437-9916

Established in 1893 (Meiji 26), Masuda Brewery began promoting *daiginjo* in the late 1960s and early 1970s, some years before *daiginjo* was widely recognized among Japanese consumers. Currently it is the brewery most closely associated with *daiginjo* in Toyama prefecture. Masuda’s main brand is Masuizumi (満寿泉). Masuizumi’s *junmai daiginjo* boasts a fruity aroma with a soft initial taste that fades to leave a lightly lingering sweetness. Masuizumi is known to be a “comfortable” sake that lightly reveals the depth and overtones of sake rice.

Masuizumi Junmai Sae (冴) combines clarity and skill, with *sae* being a clever play on both the art of sake making and the end result. Masuizumi also produces a *kijoushu* (貴醸酒), a sake

brewed using sake instead of water. Because of the doubling of the sake, *kijoushu* tends to be thick and sweet

The Iwase area of Toyama city was a thriving town for trade ships coming and going along the old Hokkoku Kaido since the beginning of the Edo era. Along the main street in Iwase, a row of wholesale shop buildings remains as it was in the Meiji Era, making it possible to step back in time while exploring the area.

Keywords for further investigation: Iwase, *daiginjo*, *kijoushu*, *sae* (冴)

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: 満寿泉, 冴

2 Fumigiku Brewery (富美菊酒造)

Address: 134-3 Hyakuzuka, Toyama, 930-2214

Phone: 076-441-9594

Founded in 1916 (Taisho 5), Fumigiku's slogan is "to brew ordinary sake like ginjo," and one of the brewery's key phrases is "思いを込めた一滴," or "A single drop full of feeling." Fumigiku brews year round, making it a four season brewery, and produces two brands, Fumigiku (富美菊) and Haneya (羽根屋). Fumigiku tends to be more traditional, preserving old local tastes, while Haneya explores new traditions.

One of flagships of the Haneya line is **Haneya Ginjo Kirabi** (煌火). The name *kirabi* carries the image and nuance of fireworks reflected brightly against an evening sky, and accordingly the sake has a clean and clear flavor. Other main products include **Haneya Junmai Daiginjo 50 Tsubasa** ("wing," 翼), and the Fumigiku *junmai* series called "Next."

Keywords for further investigation: Hyakuzuka (area)

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: 富美菊, 羽根屋, 煌火, 思いを込めた一滴

3 Yoshinotomo Brewery (吉乃友酒造)

Address: 3285-1 Fuchumachi Shimoisawa, Toyama, 939-2756

Phone: 076-466-2308

Yoshinotomo Brewery was founded in 1877 (Meiji 10) and is known for making *junmai* with Toyama rice. In fact, it is the only brewery in Toyama prefecture which brews *junmai* exclusively. The brewery aims to preserve traditional flavors while trying new approaches, such as brewing with an original sake yeast developed in Toyama.

One representative product is **Yoshinotomo Jun** (よしのとも 純), a *noukou karakuchi* (濃厚辛口) or “rich and dry” sake that goes with meals. Heating the sake slightly reveals deep undertones while enhancing the overall drinkability. Another product is **Yoshinotomo Junmai Ginjo Namagenshu Tomi no Kaori** (富の香), an undiluted and unpasteurized sake brewed with the *sakamai* (sake rice) called Tomi no Kaori. Other leading sakes include **Yoshinotomo Shiboritate** (“fresh pressed”) (よしのとも 搾りたて) and **Junmai Daiginjo Yoshidaya Chouhachi** (純米大吟醸 吉田屋 長八).

Yoshinotomo Brewery is located in Fuchu, which has become known recently as a developed bedroom community centered around a large shopping mall, Favore. Off the main road, however, there is an older Fuchu, the home of Usaka Shrine (鵜坂神社), which was established in 651 CE. Nearby historical sites also include the ruins of Yasuda Castle and

Kumano Shrine, where the famous *chigomai* dance is held. Like the brewery itself, Fuchu represents a delicate yet dynamic balance of old and new.

Keywords for further investigation: *junmai*, Fuchu, Yasuda Castle, Usaka Shrine, Kumano Shrine, *chigomai*, Tomi no Kaori rice

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: Tomi no Kaori, Yoshi no Tomo

4 Fukutsuru Brewery (福鶴酒造)

Address: 2352 Yatsuomachi Nishimachi, Toyama, 939-2355

Phone: 076-455-2727

Fukutsuru Brewery was founded in the first year of the Kaei era (1848) in Yatsuo, famous nationwide for the Owara Kaze no Bon festival (おわら風の盆) held at summer's end. Fukutsuru's sake is known to be smooth and soft, with a flavor goes down easily without a strong aftertaste.

Some of Fukutsuru's main products include **Yuuki Junmaishu Kaze no Bon** (有機純米酒 風の盆), using 100% JAS certified organic (*yuuki*) Koshihikari rice, **Gentei Daiginjo Echuu Roman** (限定大吟醸 越中浪漫), and **Yamahai Jikomi Kaze no Bon** (山麴仕込 風の盆). Befitting the refined and elegant atmosphere of the festival, Fukutsuru's sake have a flavor and feeling of class and charm.

Fukutsuru Brewery is located in central Yatsuo, up the *zenderasaka* (禅寺坂, literally "Zen Temple Hill"), the street lined with stone walls and a *keyaki* (zelkova tree, a variety of elm), a symbol of the brewery, standing nearby.

Keywords for further investigation: Yatsuo, Kaze no Bon, zenderasaka, yamahai,

Ecchu

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: Fukutsuru (副鶴)

5 Tamaasahi Brewery (玉旭酒造)

Address: 2111 Yatsuomachi Higashimachi, Toyama, 939-2354

Phone: 076-455-1331

Tamaasahi Brewery, whose name can be translated as “Treasure of the Rising Sun,” was founded in 1808 in Yatsuo, now part of Toyama city. Tamaasahi is a small brewery with limited production and prefers to sell directly to consumers, combining traditional techniques with new approaches for multi-generational appeal. One of the distinctive features of the Tamaasahi product range is that many of the sakes include English in their names. One of their top products is **Tamaasahi Junmai ginjo BLACK** (玉旭 純米吟醸 BLACK), a *ginjo* with the vibrant and animated aroma of fresh pressed sake paired with a rich junmai presence. Other sakes include **Tamaasahi Junmai Ginjo SILVER** (玉旭 純米吟醸 SILVER), **Tamaasahi Shubotsukuri Junmai Genshu ECHOES** (玉旭 酒母造り 純米原酒 ECHOES), and **Tamaasahi Houjou Junmai Yamabuki** (玉旭 豊醸純米 山吹). *Houjou* refers to a process of brewing slowly and deliberately, and *yamabuki* is a wild yellow Japanese rose.

Tamaasahi’s unique brewing and pressing techniques preserve the effervescent quality of *moromi*, giving their sake a slight acidity and lightness like wine, making Tamaasahi sake well

suiting not only to Japanese *washoku*, but to other cuisines as well. The brewery suggests drinking their sake with light Mediterranean dishes or even spicy Nepal lentil curry.

Keywords for further investigation: Yatsuo, *shubotsukuri* 酒母造り, wine vs. sake

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: Tamaasahi (玉旭), *yamabuki*

6 Hayashi Brewery (林酒造場)

Address: 1608 Sakai, Asahi, Shimonikawa District, Toyama 939-0704

Phone: 0765-82-0384

Founded in 1626 (Year 3 of the Kan'ei era), Hayashi Brewery is located on the border between Niigata and Toyama prefectures. Around 400 years ago, the founder of the brewery simultaneously held the rank of manager at the border checkpoint between prefectures (県関所); on the side, he started making sake. Hayashi Brewery has the longest history of any brewery in Toyama.

For its main product line, Hayashi Brewery uses the name “Kurobekyo” (黒部峡) in reference to the famous Kurobe Gorge (峡谷). One of its top products is **Kurobekyo Daiginjo**, a skillful *ginjo* that is both refreshing and smooth with a suitably expansive flavor. Other products include **Kurobekyo Junmai Ginjo 55**, “55” referring to the polishing ratio of the sake rice, Kurobekyo Junmai Daiginjo, and **Kurobekyo Junmaishu Mizu no Sasayaki** (“Water Whisper”) (「水のささやき」).

Hayashi Brewery is situated on a thin strip of land between the mountains and the sea, the rugged mountains providing rushing water untouched by human activity and thus perfectly

suited for sake brewing. This stretch of seashore, including the Miyazaki-sakai beach, is also famous for the jade that washes ashore and is collected. Hayashi Brewery, poised between mountains and sea, produces sake that goes well with delicacies from both.

Keywords for further investigation: Kurobe Gorge, Miyazaki-sakai Beach, jade, border checkpoint history

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: 水のささやき

7 Mikunihare Brewery (皇国晴酒造)

Address: 296 Ikuji, Kurobe, Toyama 938-0066

Phone: 0120-383-928

Mikunihare Brewery was founded around 1884 (Meiji 17) and is said to be the only sake brewery in Japan with famous mineral water gushing up on its property, officially designated as the Iwase Family Famous Mineral Water. This excellent source of brewing water contributes to a sake that is transparent, soft, and smooth. The brewery prides itself on its connection to nature, particularly its connection to one of the “100 famous mineral waters of Japan.” An exploration of this brewery should place it in the context of Kurobe’s mineral water culture.

The main product line goes by the name **Maboroshi no Taki** (幻の瀧). The term *maboroshi* as used in conjunction with sake is common but difficult to translate. In other contexts, *maboroshi* carries the connotation of a vision or hallucination, a fleeting illusion. It was first applied to sake in the 1980s which became so rare during the local sake boom that they seemed more like illusion than reality. Thus, *maboroshi no taki* can be translated as “a waterfall

of dreams, of illusions.” That this “waterfall” kanji uses the version of the character with dragon embedded inside further deepens the image of mystery.

One of the chief products is **Maboroshi no Taki Junmai Ginjo**, which has a clear, refreshing taste concealing a rich depth of rice. Other products include **Maboroshi no Taki Daiginjo** and **Maboroshi no Taki Gentei Daiginjo Hisetsu** (幻の瀧 限定大吟醸 飛雪). *Gentei* means “limited,” and *hisetsu* means “blizzard or snowdrift.” Mikunihare also produces a sparkling sake, Maboroshi Yuzu Sparkling “ShuShu,” which boasts the sour citric overtones of yuzu.

Keywords for further investigation: maboroshi, Kurobe, famed mineral water (名水), the 100 famed mineral waters of Japan (名水百選)

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: maboroshi (幻), maboroshi no taki (幻の瀧), hisetsu (飛雪), Mikunihare (皇国晴)

8 Ginban Brewery (銀盤酒造)

Address: 4853-3 Ogyu, Kurobe, Toyama 938-0801

Phone: 0765-54-1181

Ginban Brewery, founded in 1910 (Meiji 43), is located in Kurobe city overlooking the famous Kurobe Gorge. With a policy of “water and rice first,” Ginban produces high quality sake that is accessible and affordable, yet doesn’t leave a hangover. Besides their popular mass produced “paper carton” sake, Ginban is famous for its limited seasonal sakes and micro-brewed beer. Ginban has become a standard of both Kurobe and Toyama prefecture.

Ginban Brewery is a 10 minute walk from Kurobe-unazukionsen Station (黒部宇奈月温泉 駅) and just in front of Nagaya Station (長屋駅) on the Toyama Chiho Railway line. The brewery has a shop where tasting is possible, and on a clear day, customers have a good view of the Northern Alps (Hida Mountains). Visitors can savor sake brewed from one of the famous mineral water sources while taking in the Kurobe environment through taste, sight, smell, and touch.

Ginban produces sake under a variety of labels, including **Ginban** and **Kome no Shin** (米の芯), or “rice’s heart/core.” One of their longest sellers is **Junmai Daiginjo Kome no Shin** (純米大吟醸 米の芯), using Yamadanishiki sake rice grown in Hyogo prefecture and polished to a low 35 percent. It is aged using long term, low temperature storage to give it a mellow, rounded finish. Other products include **Junmai Daiginjo Banshu 50** (純米大吟醸 播州 50), Banshu being the name of a region in Hyogo prefecture and 50 again indicating the rice polishing percent. Another line uses the name **Tsurugidake**, referencing Mt. Tsurugi, which at 2999 meters is one of the tallest peaks in the Hida Mountain range and one of the 100 Famous Mountains of Japan. One sake in this line is **Tokubetsu Junmai Tsurugidake**. Finally, referencing Kurobe as a city of “famous spring water,” Ginban produces **Meisui Umakarakuchi** (名水 旨辛口, “Famous water, rich and dry”).

Keywords for further investigation: Tsurugidake, Kurobe, Northern Alps (Hida Mountains), Kurobe Gorge

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: kome no shin (米の芯), ginban (銀盤), Banshu (播州).

9 Hongo Brewery (本江酒造)

Address: 6-1 Hongoshinmachi, Uozu, Toyama 937-0803

Phone: 0765-22-0134

Hongo Brewery was founded in 1925 (Taisho 14) and is the sole brewery in Uozu, a town famous for its sea line mirage (蜃気楼, *shinkirou*). Hongo Brewery's sake is smooth with a sparkling and gorgeous finish, particularly well-suited to seafood, and its sake was used to toast the reception party for the 2017 national tree planting ceremony held in Toyama.

Hongo's flagship brand is **Hokuyo** (北洋), which means "the northern sea, the northern waters." One of its top sakes is **Daiginjo Fukurotsuri Namazake Hokuyo** (大吟醸袋吊生酒 北洋). *Fukurotsuri* refers to a technique of pressing the sake where the *moromi* (brewed, unpressed sake) is poured into special cloth bags which are then suspended to allow the sake to flow out naturally. By putting no stress on the *moromi*, the result is a sake with an exceptionally fine and delicate aftertaste, preceded by a sweet flavor and enchanting aroma. Other products make local references, such as **Hokuyo Ginjo Namazake Shinkirou no Mieru Machi Hakuto** (北洋 吟醸生酒 蜃気楼の見える街 白冬, "City where the mirage can be seen~ White Winter") and **Junmai Ginjo Ecchu Kaiko** (純米大吟醸 越中懐古, "Echhu Nostalgia").

Besides the mirage, Uozu is also famous for the Uozu Tatemon festival, which was named as an "intangible cultural heritage of humanity" by UNESCO in 2016. Uozu's *tatemon* event is one of the main events during the Jantokoi Uozu Festival. Moreover, the Kakinokiwari

(柿ノ木割) area, near Uozu Station, features over 200 restaurants and drinking spots and is an excellent place to start sampling Hongo Brewery's sake.

Keywords for further investigation: mirage (蜃気楼), Tatemon Festival,

Kakinokiwari area

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: hokuyo (北洋)

10 Chiyozuru Brewery (千代鶴酒造)

Address: 360 Shimoumezawa, Namerikawa, Toyama 936-0857

Phone: 076-475-0031

Founded in 1874 (Meiji 7), Chiyozuru Brewery is a small, family run brewery using sake rice grown in Toyama prefecture to produce a mild sake, suitable even for consumers who are not yet sake fans or whose knowledge of sake is limited.

Its main brand is **Chiyozuru** (千代鶴), and one of its recommended sakes is **Junmai Ginjo Chiyozuru**, which uses Yamadanishiki sake rice grown in Toyama prefecture. Its clean and gentle taste follows a quiet and somewhat subdued *ginjo* aroma. Chiyozuru also produces *junmai* and a *tokujou* (“specially brewed”) sakes as well.

Chiyozuru is the only brewery in Namerikawa. Namerikawa lies at the meeting point of the Hayatsuki River, which flows rapidly down from the nearby Tateyama Mountain range, and Toyama Bay, with deep sea water reaching 333 meters deep, leaving Chiyozuru Brewery uniquely balanced between two rich and abundant sources of water.

Keywords for further investigation: Namerikawa, Yamadanishiki (grown in

Toyama), Hayatsuki River, *tokujou*

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: Chiyozuru (千代鶴)

11 Takazawa Brewery (高澤酒造場)

Address: 18-7 Kitoomachi, Himi, Toyama, 935-0004

Phone: 0766-72-0006

Founded in 1877 (Meiji 5) and located near the seashore in Himi, a city famous for *kanburi* (cold season yellowtail), Takazawa Brewery produces a soft and smooth dry type of sake using the motto “sake that pairs with seafood.” The sea around Himi was traditionally called Ariiso (有磯), from which the brewery derives the name of its most popular line of sake. It is said that Takazawa Brewery’s founder, Riemon, came to Himi and was so moved by the beauty of the rising sun and the Tateyama mountain range that he decided to start brewing sake there. In this way, Takazawa’s brand name **Ariiso Akebono** evokes the poetic image of watching the daybreak (*akebono*) over the Ariiso Sea. The brand label is a minimal design capturing this dual image: the rising sun and Mt. Tate.

The sea breeze (海風) that rolls in from the northeast, called *ainokaze* (あいの風), is used to cool the steamed rice at Takazawa Brewery, and all sake pressed using the *funeshibori* technique, a traditional and time-consuming method of hand pressing sake to avoid applying stress to the *moromi*.

A representative Takazawa sake is **Junmai Daiginjo Ariiso Akebono**, which pairs an elegant and graceful aroma with the *umami* of sake rice that swells in the mouth before

smoothly fading. In the same line, Takazawa also produces a *daiginjo*, a *junmai ginjo*, and a *junmai*. Outside of the Ariiso Akebono line, there is **Hatsuarashi** (初嵐). *Hatsuarashi* is a seasonal expression (*kigo*) used in haiku and other literature and refers to the first strong wind of autumn.

Keywords for further investigation: Himi, Ariiso Sea, kanburi and sake, *ainokaze*

(あいの風)

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: *hatsuarashi* (初嵐), *akebono* (曙)

12 Kiyoto Brewery (清都酒造場)

Address: 12-12 Kyomachi, Takaoka, Toyama 933-0917

Phone: 0766-22-0557

Kiyoto Brewery was founded in 1906 (Meiji 39), a year after Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5). To commemorate the victory, Kiyoto Brewery's sake was christened with the name *kachikoma* (勝駒, "the winning horse"). "Accept nothing fake" (不容偽) has been the brewery's motto since its founding, and in 2000 (Heisei 12), the brewery's building was registered as a tangible cultural property (有形文化財). It is known as the smallest brewery in Hokuriku. Kiyoto is located in Takaoka, a city known for its craftsmanship and craftsman culture.

One of its representative products is **Junmaishu Kachikoma**, using Koshihikari rice grown in Toyama prefecture. With a base drawing upon the inherent *umami* of Koshihikari perfectly combined with a gentle aroma, it is a *junmai* brewed at the *ginjo* level. Other products

in the Kachikoma line include *daiginjo*, *junmai ginjo*, and *honjikomi* (本仕込, a term that is usually used as an alternative to *honjozo*.)

Keywords for further investigation: Takaoka (especially craft culture)

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: *kachikoma* (勝駒), *honjikomi* (本仕込み), 不容偽

13 Wakatsuru Brewery (若鶴酒造)

Address: 208 Saburomaru, Tonami, Toyama 939-1308

Phone: 0763-32-3032

Wakatsuru Brewery was founded in 1862 (Bunkyo 2) in Tonami city, where it brews sake from underground water drawn from the Shou River (庄川). From autumn to the first of spring, Wakatsuru produces Japanese sake, and from summer until early autumn, whiskey.

Immediately following World War 2, in the midst of rice shortages and facing an uncertain future of sake brewing, Wakatsuru began research into distillation techniques and in 1952 received a whiskey making license. In July 2017, supported by a successful crowd funding drive, Wakatsuru opened the only whiskey distillery in Hokuriku where tours are possible. Wakatsuru's whiskey, named "Sunshine Whiskey Premium," boasts a mild, smoky taste and has many fans.

Of sake, Wakatsuru produces two main lines: **Karakuchi Gen** (玄, with connotations of "profundity, depth, expertise"), a long-time local favorite, and **Noukaya** (苗加屋) for more serious sake enthusiasts.

Of the Noukaya line, there are several “colors” to choose from. One of the most popular is **Noukaya tokubetsu Junmai Rin no Ao** (琳青, “Blue Jewel”). *Rin* refers to a jewel (or the tinkling sound of jewelry), while *ao* is blue. For this *junmai*, 100% Oyamanishiki (雄山錦), a sake rice variety developed in Toyama, is used. As an unfiltered, unpasteurized sake with no water added, the unique characteristics of Oyamanishiki are delicately drawn out and preserved. The Noukaya line also includes a *junmai daiginjo* called **Rin no Kuro** (琳黒, “black jewel”) and a *junmai ginjo* named **Rin no Aka** (琳赤, “red jewel”).

The **Gen** series features **Karakuchi Gen Gin Label** (辛口 玄 銀ラベル, *gin*=silver) while there is also a *kijoushu* called simply **Wakatsuru**.

Keywords for further investigation: Oyamanishiki, Shou river, Sunshine Whiskey

Premium, post-war rice shortages and sake brewing in Toyama

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: gen (玄), rin (琳)

14 Yoshie Brewery (吉江酒造)

Address: 5-5 Wakakusamachi, Tonami, Toyama 939-1356

Phone: 0763-32-2232

Founded in 1948 (Showa 23), Yoshie Brewery is a relatively new sake brewery. Though its output is small, Yoshie is keenly aware of customer expectations and works to make the best sake possible. As for their sake brand name, it uses one of Toyama’s symbols and sacred mountains, Tachiyama (太刀山). Like Wakatsuru Brewery, Yoshie Brewery is located in Tonami city and uses underground water from the Shou River for its brewing. The Tonami Plain is

known historically as a fertile grain producing area and has been recognized for its “dispersed settlement” style of development, unusual for rural areas in Japan, which typically favor tightly developed villages surrounded by shared farmland.

Yoshie Brewery’s Tachiyama line includes *junmai ginjo*, *daiginjo*, and *junmai*. A special junmai uses the name **Hana no Sato** (花の郷, “city of flowers”), in reference to Tonami’s close relation with flower cultivation: in spring, tulips, in summer, Japanese iris, and in autumn, lavender.

Keywords for further investigation: Tonami, tulip, Japanese iris, lavender, dispersed settlement in Tonami, Tachiyama

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: Tachiyama

15 立山酒造 **Tateyama Brewery**

Address: 217 Nakano, Tonami, Toyama 939-1322

Phone: 0763-33-3330

Tateyama Brewery was founded in 1830 in Tonami and is currently the largest sake maker in Hokuriku with fans nationwide. It appeared in the Paris World Fair in 1900. Tateyama’s refreshing flavor and refined aftertaste is considered representative of the Hokuriku style of sake.

One of their prime sakes is **Tokubetsu Junmaishu Aiyama Shuchusen** (特別純米酒 愛山酒中仙). Aiyama is a sake rice known to have a larger *shinpaku* (starchy core) than Yamadanishiki. This sake has a classic junmai “ricy” flavor with a faintly sweet and soft aroma

on top. The name **Shuchusen** is connected to *shusen* (酒仙), which refers to someone who can forget the cares of the world in favor of drink, a “son of Bacchus” kind of character. Tateyama’s **Junmai Daiginjo Tateyama Amahara** (純米大吟醸 立山雨晴) carries the poetic name “After the rain.” Tateyama also produces a complete range of sakes under the **Tateyama** brand name, including *honjousho* and *ginjo*.

Tateyama Brewery is known for its attention to quality control. It polishes sake rice on-site using top equipment, using only certified sake rice. This quality control extends to the high techniques of sake brewers as well. All materials and processes are traceable and this information is made public on the company’s website; a high degree of quality and safety assurance is applied to all Tateyama’s products and materials.

Keywords for further investigation: Tateyama, Shou River, traceability and sake making

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: Tateyama, *amahara* (雨晴), *shuchusen* (酒中仙), *shusen* (酒仙).

16 Wakakoma Brewery (若駒酒造場)

Address: 3601 Inami, Nanto, Toyama 932-0211

Phone: 0763-82-7373

Wakakoma Brewery was founded in 1889 (Meiji 22) in the village of Inami (井波) known as a spiritual and religious center and famous for its wood carving and woodcrafts. Accordingly,

Wakakoma produces a sturdy and reliable dry sake, suitable to mountains and wood, that can be served either chilled or warmed.

Their flagship sake, **Karakuchi Junmai Wakakoma** (辛口純米 若駒) is brewed from local rice; with just the right acidity, it suits a wide range of drinking styles. Another of their premium sakes, **Ginjoshu Wakakoma Tenba** (吟醸酒 若駒 天馬) takes its name *tenba* from “a horse living in the heavens; Pegasus,” while **Junmai Ginjo Megumi** (純米吟醸 萌) evokes spring in the mountains with its kanji 萌, which means “sprout or bud.” Incidentally, this kanji is usually pronounced *moe*, but is given the reading *megumi* here, conflating the notion of “sprout” with “blessing,” creating a strong image of spring in the mountains.

The horse image that appears in the brewery name (*wakakoma* means “young horse”) as well as in its product line (the aforementioned *tenba*), reflects the founders’ desire for their sake to become widespread and well-loved with the power and vitality of a young horse springing to the heavens.

Inami village lies on the southern tip of the Nanto plain, embraced by the foothills of Mt. Yaotome. After the famous Zuisenji Temple was destroyed in a fire, the process of rebuilding it served as the impetus for the development of a wood crafting culture in Inami, and woodcraft remains synonymous with the village today. Walking along the historic Yokamachi Street (八日町通り) towards the temple and the brewery, visitors can hear the comfortable, echoing sounds of wood being skillfully worked in the traditional shops.

Keywords for further investigation: Zuisenji, Yokamachi Street, Inami woodcraft

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: wakakoma, moe/megumi (萌), tenba

17 Narimasa Brewery 成政酒造

Address: 418 Tachi, Nanto, Toyama 939-1676

Phone: 0763-52-0204

Narimasa Brewery was founded 1894 (Meiji 27) in Nanto near a place associated with a Warring States (*Sengoku*) commander named Sasa Narimasa. The region is noted in Toyama for its excellent sake rice cultivation. “Brewing up the spirit” (魂を醸す) is Narimasa Brewery’s motto.

Narimasa Brewery produces sake primarily under the brand name **Narimasa**. A few of their representative products include **Daiginjo Narimasa** (大吟醸 なりまさ); **Oyamanishiki Junmai Shiboritate** (雄山錦 純米 しぼりたて), a fresh pressed *junmai* using the Toyama sake rice Oyamanishiki; **Yamahaishikomi Junmai Ginjo**, a *junmai ginjo* with starter mash made using the traditional and painstaking Yamahai technique; and **Junmai Usuao** (純米酒 淡清), whose name *usuao* can be translated as “calm and clear.”

During the Warring States period of Japanese history (approx. 1467-1568 CE) the daimyo of Echchu, military commander named Sasa Narimasa, demanded water at the base of louzen and struck his spear into the middle of the mountains; from this spot came gushing out what came to be known as “spearhead water” (槍の先の水). Even today, this spring water is used as the community’s tap water and the water for brewing at Narimasa Brewery.

“Spearhead Water” is known for its soft and clear taste and low mineral content, making it well suited for sake brewing.

Keywords for further investigation: 槍の先の水, Sasa Narimasa, *yamahai*,

Warring States period (*Sengoku*).

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: 「魂を醸す」

18 Sanshoraku Brewery 三笑楽酒造

Address: 678 Kaminashi, Nanto, Toyama 939-1914

Phone: 0763-66-2010

Founded 1880 (Meiji 13), Sanshoraku Brewery is located in Gokayama, which has been registered as a World Heritage site. Located in the southwest area of Toyama prefecture, a place of steep mountains and deep ravines, Sanshoraku Brewery produces a sake that is full-bodied to suit the bitter alkali taste of spring mountain vegetables, but with a refreshingly clean aftertaste. As a flexible and versatile sake that goes well with a variety of cuisines, Sanshoraku sake is popular in restaurants and drinking establishments.

Under the brand name **Sanshoraku**, the brewery produces a full range of sake, from *junmai ginjo*, *daiginjo*, and *junmai*, all of which combine a light, attenuated sweetness with a richness that goes well with food.

Gokayama is an area of relatively heavy snowfall, averaging 2 meters, and has historically been one of the most secluded regions in Hokuriku. Now best known for its unique traditional architecture, Gokayama was registered by UNESCO as a world heritage site in 1995.

The harsh climate and natural features of Gokayama are part of the essence of Sanshoraku, brewed with water springing from the primeval birch forests that protect Gokayama from landslides.

Keywords for further investigation: Gokayama, Nanto, mountain vegetable cuisine in Toyama

Terms for etymological/literary investigation: Sanshoraku (三笑楽)

Part III: A quick English reference chart of the sake breweries In Toyama prefecture

	Brewery name	Representative brand(s)	Location	Founded	Website
1	榊田酒造店 Masuda Brewery	満寿泉 Masuizumi	Toyama (Iwase)	1893	http://www.masuizumi.co.jp
2	富美菊酒造 Fumigiku Brewery	富美菊 Fumigiku 羽根屋 Haneya	Toyama (Hyakuzuka)	1916	www.fumigiku.co.jp
3	吉乃友酒造 Yoshinotomo Brewery	吉乃友 Yoshinotomo	Toyama (Fuchuu)	1877	http://yoshinotomo.jp
4	福鶴酒造 Fukutsuru Brewery	越中浪漫 Ecchu Roman 風の盆 Kaze no Bon	Toyama (Yatsuo)	1848	www.kazenobon.co.jp
5	玉旭酒造 Tamaasahi Brewery	玉旭 Tamaasahi	Toyama (Yatsuo)	1808	www.tamaasahi.jp
6	林酒造場 Hayashi Brewery	黒部峡 Kurobekyo	Asahi	1626	www.hayashisyuzo.com
7	皇国晴酒造 Mikunihare Brewery	幻の瀧 Maboroshi no Taki	Kurobe	1884	www.mabotaki.co.jp
8	銀盤酒造 Ginban Brewery	米の芯 Kome no Shin 銀盤 Ginban	Kurobe	1910	www.ginban.co.jp
9	本江酒造 Hongo Brewery	北洋 Hokuyo	Uozu	1925	
10	千代鶴酒造 Chiyozuru Brewery	千代鶴 Chiyozuru	Namerikawa	1874	http://www.chiyozuru.com
11	高澤酒造場 Takazawa Brewery	有機 曙 Ariiso Akebono	Himi	1877	https://ariiso-akebono.jp
12	清都酒造場 Kiyoto Brewery	勝駒 Kachikoma	Takaoka	1906	
13	若鶴酒造 Wakatsuru Brewery	辛口 玄 Karakuchi Gen 苗加屋 Noukaya	Tonami	1862	www.wakatsuru.co.jp
14	吉江酒造 Yoshie Brewery	太刀山 Tachiyama	Tonami	1948	
15	立山酒造 Tateyama Brewery	立山 Tateyama	Nanto	1830	www.sake-tateyama.com
16	若駒酒造場 Wakakoma Brewery	若駒 Wakakoma	Nanto	1889	
17	成政酒造 Narimasa Brewery	成政 Narimasa	Nanto	1894	www.narimasa.co.jp
18	三笑楽酒造 Sanshoraku Brewery	三笑楽 Sanshoraku	Nanto	1880	www.sanshyouraku.jp