

Sustainable Management Practices of Japanese Companies in Pre-War Period from the Perspective of SDGs and ESG 5 : Meizen Kinbara : The Pioneer of Social Business

Hasegawa, Naoya / Takehara, Masaatsu

(出版者 / Publisher)

法政大学イノベーション・マネジメント研究センター

(雑誌名 / Journal or Publication Title)

法政大学イノベーション・マネジメント研究センター ワーキングペーパーシリーズ

(巻 / Volume)

225

(開始ページ / Start Page)

1

(終了ページ / End Page)

16

(発行年 / Year)

2020-04-07

Masaatsu Takehara and Naoya Hasegawa

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5

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April 7, 2020

No. **225**

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(5) Meizen Kinbara: The pioneer of social business

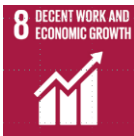










Meizen Kinbara(1832-1923)

(Source) National Diet Library

Masaatsu Takehara, Naoya Hasegawa

Achievement of Meizen Kinbara and related SDGs

Economy	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Banking (Kinbara Bank) *Sawmill industry (Tenryu timber) *Transportation industry (Tenryu Transportation) * Product sales (Tori Gumi)
Society	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Tenryu River Flood Control Project (Chiga Cooperation) *Promotion of flood control education (Suiri school) *Promotion of Rehabilitation for ex-prisoners (Shizuoka Kanzenkai)
Environment	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Promotion of reforestation (Kinbara forest) *Irrigation (the Kinbara Foundation for Forest Conservation and Flood Control) *Establish an economy of recycling *Promoting an idea of forest conservation and flood control
Governance	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Practice of management based on philosophy *Practice of private-government partnership

1. Early days

In 1832, Meizen Kinbara was born in Anma-town, Higashi-ku, Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture. His family were landowners who ran both a sake brewery and a pawn shop. In 1848, Meizen's father, a talented man in business and management, was promoted as the local administrator of the Matsudaira family, which was a direct retainer of the Shogun (head of state). Meizen's father was a person who got up before dawn, prepared for work, predicted the weather of the day, and worked hard until late at night. Meizen was described as a person who worked hard and helped others. It seems that his father's way of life influenced his personality. From an early age, Meizen had a keen interest in practicing his knowledge he learned.

In 1849, when Meizen was 18 years old, his mother died at the age of 37. The deceased mother was worried about the future of the Kinbara family so she left a will about Meizen's stepmother and Meizen's wife. Meizen and his father followed the will. The father married Meizen's mother's cousin, and Meizen married his stepmother's daughter, Tamaki, when he was 24.

In 1855, Meizen inherited the job of the head of village at the same time he married. In 1857, the lord Matsudaira family convened each regional administrator to Edo (current Tokyo) to discuss measures of financial reconstruction. At this time, Meizen went to Edo for the first time on behalf of his father. Among the representatives gathered in Edo, there were those who went out for drinking every night while working. However, Meizen refused such an invitation, worked hard on the debt problems of his lord, and used his spare time for studying Confucianism.

Figure 1: Meizen Kinbara's birthplace
(Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture)



(Source)Meizen Memorial

After solving the debt problem of his lord's family, Meizen was involved in the debt consolidation of Totoumiya. Totoumiya was a trading house which was established in Yokohama by Meizen's father, his four relatives and fellow landowners. It worked as a wholesaler selling goods collected from all over the country to foreign traders. In the Enshu region (the western part of Shizuoka Prefecture), the production of high-value-added crops became mainstream due to the penetration of the commodity economy. A typical product was cotton.

The suburbs of the village where Meizen's birthplace was located had a textile market and it played an important role as a cluster of agricultural products and goods from the Edo period . In addition, Kaketsuka Port, at the mouth of the Tenryu River, was a logistics base connecting Edo and Osaka, and functioned as a product shipping port in the Enshu region. Taking advantage of the land as a key transportation center, Meizen's father tried to sell goods made in Omi and near-by Shinshu areas to foreign trading houses.

Totoumiya's business started off smoothly. However, the shortage of working capital became more serious as the transaction volume expanded. The management of Totoumiya was entrusted to the Kinbara family. Meizen and his father did not go to Yokohama, entrusting their relatives managed things there. The Kinbara family conflicted with the co-investor over the investment in Totoumiya, and additional investment was postponed. Local managers were pressed for cash flow, so they repeatedly borrowed money and diverted sales money, which eventually put Totoumiya into bankruptcy.

It was customary in the Edo period that a Han (feudal domain) took over the debts of merchants dealing with the Han's products. Co-investors asked for debts to be dealt with by the Han and the Kinbara family. Meizen decided to use all of the Kinbara family money for reimbursement.

He said:

"Responsibility for damages arising from our own greed should not be transferred to the Han. We will throw out all our personal property to solve the problem." Most creditors were shippers of cotton and tea in the Enshu region. They accepted Meizen's graceful attitude and commitment, and abandoned their accounts receivables equivalent to 62.5% of total debt. This experience gave Meizen a guideline for his life. Meizen realized that in his life it was not property that he had to rely on, but morality and trust.

2. The essence as a social entrepreneur

2.1 Tenryu River Flood Control Project

Meizen was born in the basin of the Tenryu River so he witnessed the horror of flooding from his childhood. Between 1850 and 1868, it was recorded that the Tenryu River underwent five major breakdowns. Among the various social projects that Meizen tackled throughout his life, the flood control project for the Tenryu River was particularly important.

The Tenryu River originates from Lake Suwa in Nagano Prefecture and it is a rapid stream, 213km in length, that flows into the Pacific Ocean through Nagano, Aichi and Shizuoka Prefectures. In its upstream area there are 3,000-meter class mountains, and all the tributaries that flow into the Tenryu River are steep. In addition, because the geology is brittle and has a rugged terrain, when heavy rain falls in the mountainous area, a large amount of water and sand flows into the Tenryu River. The residents of the basin were afraid of the Tenryu River and called it the “Violent Tenryu”.

Figure 2 Tenryu River near Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture



(Source) Wikimedia Commons

In 1868, Meizen submitted his proposal on the Tenryu River Flood Control Project to the new Meiji government. The proposal was to carry out full-scale river improvement work to permanently protect the river basin residents from the flood damage that caused serious suffering for many years. Meizen's enthusiasm moved the key people of the Meiji government such as Tomomi Iwakura and Takayoshi Kido, and they ordered Meizen to work on the Tenryu River flood control works.

Meizen started work on the restoration of destroyed levees by investing his own money, 800 Ryo (Ryo was a currency in the Edo period) and additional an 80,000 Ryo borrowed from shrines,

temples, and wealthy families. The work was completed in two months.

For this achievement, Meizen was allowed to have a family name as well as a sword by Emperor Meiji when the emperor was on his trip to Tokyo¹. Later, Meizen was ordered by the Hamamatsu Han to lead the Tenryu River project as project director.

Meizen was planning to close the east branch river of the Tenryu River as a drastic flood control measure. This was because sediment accumulation in a combined flow area where a branch river joined with a main river was considered to cause a bank collapse when the river levels rose. In that period, it was rumored that people who opposed Meizen's plan to close the east branch river would attack Meizen's house because the east branch river was used as a waterway to Kaketsuka Port. Eventually, Meizen had to give up the plan because he could not obtain an understanding of the residents in the river area.

After that, he came up with a new plan in which a canal leading to Lake Hamana would be excavated, the Tenryu River would be diverted, the meandering Tenryu River would be repaired, and a cobblestone embankment installed.

In 1874, Meizen established Tenryugawa-dori Teibo Kaisha (Tenryu River Embankment Company).

Meizen grasped the essence of the company as a for-profit business and a non-profit business, according to its business purpose. He took a for-profit business as a business that benefited his company as well as others, and a non-profit business was a business that benefited others without seeking its own profit. He called the company promoting non-profit business as Jikei kaisha (Charity company). Meizen stated that the Tenryu River Embankment Company was a charity company.

The following year, he renamed the company Chiga Kyoryoku Sha Company (Chiga Cooperation Company) and the company was operated mainly with capital contributions and subsidies from the Shizuoka prefecture. However, subsidies from the government were reduced due to the Seinan War². In addition, the company's inability to expect dividends due to the nature of the charitable company made the company suffer a shortage of funds from the beginning.

To resolve this situation, Meizen decided to devote all his property and met with Toshimichi Okubo, the minister of Interior, who had great influence within the Meiji government. Meizen talked to Okubo in person and requested that Kinbara dispose of the entire property of the Kinbara

family and use the proceeds for the riverbank protection project so the government would financially support the lack of funding. Meizen's request was accepted, and the government decided to partially shoulder the construction costs.

In 1878, Shizuoka prefectural governor accepted Meizen's request to donate his family property. The total amount of assets that Meizen declared was 63,516 yen. Of this amount, 56,016 yen was donated to Chiga Cooperation Company, after deducting 5,000 yen for the Kinbara Family's assets and 2,500 yen for their living expenses and operating capital. The government promised a subsidy of 23,000 yen for 10 years.³

As part of his efforts on flood control measures, Meizen established a school to train professionals for water controls. The school had a main course (two years) and a preparatory course (two years). In the main course, engineers for river improvement were trained by conducting on-the-job training at the embankment construction site in the Tonegawa River basin⁴. Meizen and his wife donated their assets and moved to a simple hut on the banks of the Tenryu River, which served as an office and residence called a river barn. In 1878, Meizen was granted an audience with the Emperor Meiji in this river barn when the Emperor was making an Imperial tour.

In 1880, the government changed its policy and river improvement costs were to be paid from local taxes. For this reason, the grant to Chiga Cooperation Company was abolished with the 1881 grant as the last grant. The embankment construction came under the direct control of Shizuoka Prefecture, and Chiga Cooperation Company undertook only river improvement. Although the subsidies were terminated, the company's financial base was stabilized and its social reputation enhanced due to Meizen's steady management

Many residents of the river basin, who tried to keep away from Meizen before, wished to invest in Chiga Cooperation Company, but Meizen declined all of these offers. Chiga Cooperation Company was a non-profit organization running public works, stating that the company would conduct social business based on Article 1 of company rules enacted in 1881.

However, as the company was allowed to put the remaining funds from Shizuoka Prefecture into the capital reserve after deducting construction costs, the people who noticed this offered to invest in the hope of receiving dividends. Of course, Meizen did not use this mechanism to line his own pocket, but those whose investments offer were refused criticized Meizen by saying that he used private donations and grants to make his own money.

The residents of the river basin asked the Governor of Shizuoka Prefecture to allow them to invest in the Chiga Cooperation Company, because they could not bear Meizen monopolizing the company's profits. The prefectural governor, who was informed by the Ministry of the Interior, recommended that Meizen accept the investment from the basin residents.

Meizen understood that the purpose and policy of the project would be decided by majority vote. Those who wanted to invest in Chiga Cooperation were those who initially refused to invest. Meizen asserted that they did not properly understand the purpose of the company and he was worried that the company's funds would be diverted for wrong purposes decided by majority vote.

Meizen firmly refused to accept new investment, and in 1885 he decided to dissolve the Chiga Cooperation. Of the ¥ 170,000 reserve fund owned by the company, 100,000 yen equivalent to the subsidy was returned to Shizuoka Prefecture, and about 70,000 yen that the prefecture did not accept was left in the hands of Meizen. This funds was later spent on afforestation projects.⁵

Meizen held his silence on a series of criticisms. There is no evidence that he attempted to engage with the basin residents. In order for the river organization to achieve its objectives, it may have been necessary for Meizen to engage in dialogue with stakeholders in the basin. If Meizen had understood expectations, opinions, and evaluations of the people in the basin, there is a possibility that the company and the river basin community might have been integrated by reflecting them in the company's activities.

NPOs and social entrepreneurs who are leading social business today value stakeholder engagement. Although Meizen complained about the responses of the river basin residents and Shizuoka prefecture, it is very doubtful whether the residents fully understood the philosophy and business objectives of Meizen's activities at the time because social communication was limited. So the question remains as to why Meizen avoided dialogue with the local residents.

The main projects carried out by the Chiga Cooperation Company were as follows:

- (1) Comprehensive survey of the Tenryu River,
- (2) Height survey from Lake Suwa to Kasjima, Futamata-town, Tenryu-ward, Hamamatsu-city
- (3) Survey from Futamata Town (Tenryu-ward, Hamamatsu) to the Tenryu River Estuary
- (4) Installation of Watermarks in 21 locations.

The river rehabilitation project, handed over to the government, was completed in 1899. The total construction cost reached about 660,000 yen.

2.2 Reforestation business

Meizen used the 70,000 yen which was returned to him with the dissolution of the river embankment company for tree-planting projects. He set out the following philosophy when he started a reforestation project.

“Land management must first manage mountains and rivers... The mountains of Shinshu, Enshu, and Mikawa regions, which are the water sources of rivers, are lined with bald mountains, with landslides and exposed rocks. Therefore, we need to improve this, protect and recharge the water source, and solidify the base of flood control.”

Thus, Meizen devoted the remaining 40 years of his life to reforestation. The reforestation project was conducted as Meizen’s private business.

Meizen inspected the Tenryu River basin by himself and determined that the government-owned forest in Tatsuyama-town, Tenryu-ward, Hamamatsu-city would be a site for reforestation, and submitted a proposal to improve the government forest in 1885 to the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. It was a large-scale project, planting about 2.9 million cedars and cypress trees for 15 years from 1887 to 1901. There was some objection within the government, but permission was granted with good words of Yajiro Shinagawa, vice-minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce.

In 1889, the forest in which Meizen conducted the tree planting project (Sejiri forest) was designated as a royal forest (forest owned by the Imperial Family). Meizen purchased privately owned forests adjacent to the Imperial Forest at his own expense and established the Kinbara Forestry Office as a management base. The cost of the reforestation project for the imperial forest was approximately 54,000 yen, and including the 36,000 yen for the Kinbara Forest, the total project cost reached 90,000 yen. The total project cost could not be covered with the returned funds when the river cooperation company was dissolved, therefore additional funding was needed. The funds required for the reforestations were provided by the profits of the finance business and the lumber business described below.⁶

In 1890, Meizen was appointed as advisor of the Bureau of Imperial Property (Goryo-kyoku in

Japanese) on the recommendation of Yashiro Shinagawa, Director of the Bureau, who was in charge of the management of the Imperial Forest. Meizen was asked to work on reforestation of the Amagi Imperial Forest in Izu in Shizuoka prefecture. It is said that Shinagawa's intention was to show the model of a well-preserved forest and to correct the trend at the time when the public interest was not respected, giving priority to private interests. The Ministry of the Imperial Household appreciated Meizen's achievements of preserving the Imperial Forest in Sejiri and gave Meizen a pair of gold cups and a reward of 50,000 yen.

Meizen is said to have stated as follows:

"Investing in reforestation is just like bank deposits, and reforestation is more profitable than bank deposits. However, this deposit cannot be withdrawn for 100 years. Therefore the money to be invested in reforestation should be surplus money. And this surplus money comes from frugal life". It was Meizen's spirit of hard working and helping others that supported the reforestation project that required substantial financial resources.

Figure 3 Meizen continued his visit to the forest until the age of 92



(Source) Meizen Kinbara Memorial Hall

2.3 Hydrophobic business

Meizen had a strong interest in dividing the Tenryu River and planned to open an irrigation channel connecting the Tenryu River and Lake Hamanako, located west of Hamamatsu. However, Shizuoka Prefecture opposed that plan which had many technical challenges and required huge construction costs.

In 1903, Meizen proposed to the governor of Shizuoka Prefecture that he would donate his forests and establish the Tenryu River Canal Association, which would undertake the construction

of the canal from the Tenryu River. The following year, the Kinbara Canal Foundation was established, funded by 1,200 hectares of forest owned by Meizen. The foundation was aimed at diverting the Tenryu River to draw irrigation water into the Mikatahara plateau, promoting agriculture, and supplying inexpensive power to improve industrial development and transportation.

However, the diversion work began only after Meizen passed away. In 1938, the Kinbara Canal Foundation was renamed the Kinbara Foundation for Forest Conservation and Flood Control, and with the donation from the foundation for all of the local construction costs, the construction of the Hamana drainage improvement project started. The Mikatahara Irrigation Project was completed in 1968, and the Lower Tenryu River Irrigation Project was completed in 1979.

2.4 Project to protect ex-prisoners

Meizen's desire to protect and nurture ex-prisoners came from his encounter with Ichiro Kawamura from Oita Prefecture. Meizen met with Kawamura through an introduction by Kenzaburo Okamoto, who used to serve as an official in charge of water control in the Department of the Imperial Household.⁷ Okamoto met Kawamura in prison when he was imprisoned in Shizuoka Prison as a political prisoner. At the request of Okamoto, Meizen hired Kawamura at Chiga Cooperation Company. Meizen also learned through Okamoto and Kawamura about severe situations inside prisons and plights of ex-prisoners after they were released, so he established a new organization, the Kanzenkai, which aimed at protecting the ex-prisoners. The purpose of Kanzenkai was to help ex-prisoners find a path to social rehabilitation by providing them with protection, education and placement services.

Activities of Kanzenkai started when the Hamamatsu Kanzenkai was established in Hamamatsu in 1882, and the Shizuoka Kanzenkai was established in Shizuoka in 1883. The Kanzenkai commissioned two persons in each village in Shizuoka prefecture to serve as guardians to support ex-prisoners. In 1882, in cooperation with Kawamura, who was hired as chief of the Shizuoka Prison, Meizen established the Shizuoka Ex-prisoners Protection Company.

The former detainees transferred their income from work to the company, and the company made a reserve after it deducted some money for their cost of living. When the saved amount reached 55 yen, the entire amount was returned to the inmates, and they took the first step to live

independently. Meizen's efforts became the origins of modern thought of rehabilitation and protection for ex-prisoners, and they were expanded by vigorous private sector efforts.

In 1939, a related law was enacted and rehabilitation and protection for ex-prisoners was clearly positioned as a national system.

3. Meizen's footsteps as entrepreneur

3.1 Transportation industry

Meizen's mission was to use the profits from business for public interest. When discussing Meizen, we tend to focus on his social activities, but we should not forget a fact that he was an outstanding entrepreneur. His reforestation activities spawned for-profit businesses such as transport and sawmills. He thought that in order for the reforestation activities to spread throughout the country, he had to show that forestry could be a viable business. Therefore, Meizen devised a business model based on inexpensive transportation systems and high value-added sawmill technology.

In 1889, the entire Tokaido Line, a railway connecting Tokyo to Kobe Station in Hyogo Prefecture, was opened. In response, Meizen came up with an idea of a timber transport business by rail and established the Tenryu Transport Company in 1892. When the Tenryu-River Station was opened in 1898, the company connected the Tenryu-River Station and the west bank of the Tenryu River to improve the efficiency of freight transportation.

Traditionally, wood produced from the upper reaches of the Tenryu River was collected to Kaketsuka-port in rafts and transported to various consumption areas by sea route. The development of rail transportation greatly enhanced the forestry business in the Tenryu River basin.

The Tenryu Transport Company opened branches in Shinbashi, Minami-Senju and Akihabara, handling timber, paper, ore, sundries and other goods. Later, it was absorbed into Nippon Express under government control during World War II. After the war, it served as a logistics hub linking water transport and railroads. However, when the construction of a dam interrupted timber transportation by raft, it began to transport mainly gravel and oil. The rails developed by the Tenryu Transport Company operated as Nippon Express's Tenryu-River Railway until 1993.

3.2 Lumber industry

Meizen worked to improve the profitability of reforestation activities by increasing the added value of timber produced from the Tenryu River basin. In 1881, the predecessor company of Tenryu Timber Co., Ltd. was founded by an executive of the Chiga Cooperation Company. The company operated a modern, mechanized sawmill powered by steam. However, it had only a few employees who were skilled in machine operations, and demand was stagnant due to the recession, eventually the company was dissolved four years after its establishment.

The company changed its name and restarted as Meizen's private business, but it could not show an indication of performance recovery. After that, the company restarted in 1907 as Tenryu Timber. The company's management was led by Meizen's students. Among them were Shinichi Suzuki, who served as one arm of Meizen and later became chairman of the Kinbara Forestry and Flood Control Foundation, and Matajuro Hirano, founder of the Shizuoka Bank. Meizen was not a shareholder or board member of the company, but he was a de facto founder.

3.3 Banking

The Chiga Cooperation Company deposited funds at Maruya Bank established in 1879. However, in the 1880s, the bank was forced into bankruptcy in 1884, impacted by a recession as a result of fiscal austerity policies promoted by then Minister of Finance Masayoshi Matsukata. The founder of the bank, Hayashi Yuteki, took over as president of the bank, and organized a credit management company with the cooperation of creditors and shareholders wishing to save the bank. Meizen played a core role as one of its creditors.

Prior to the enforcement of the commercial law, banks' shareholders had unlimited liability, forcing them to pay more than their stake in response to creditor demands. In 1886, Meizen established a credit management company called Touri Exchange Store in order to protect the receivables held by the former Maruya Bank. The Touri Exchange Store collected loans on behalf of the former Maruya Bank, and spent the collected loans to pay creditors.

In 1899, the Touri Exchange Store was reorganized into a general partnership company, Kinbara Bank, and Meizen became president. In 1917, the bank was reorganized into a joint-stock company, and Meizen's adopted grandson, Misaburo Kinbara, became president. Entering into the Showa era in 1920, when the war became more intense, the government took measures to accelerate the

merger of banks in order to establish a wartime economic system. As a result, in 1940, the Kinbara Bank was merged by the Bank of Mitsubishi and closed its history.

Meizen's bank management was based on his philosophy that "money needs to be made in valueless places (urban areas) and needs to be used in valuable places (countryside)." It is clear that the valuable places referred to the Tenryu River flood control project. Virtually, the financial base of social business Meizen promoted was supported by the Kinbara Bank. Furthermore, the Kinbara Bank had as its slogan that "if you abandon selfishness, you can achieve anything".

4. Meizen Kinbara's Management Philosophy

Meizen practiced business by spending the profits earned from commercial business for social projects. He maintained his attitude of raising social value throughout his life. His philosophy is expressed in his belief that "(1) Gaining practical interest has higher priority over honor, (2) Value practice, and (3) Place importance on outcomes and do not stick to own interests.

Meizen criticized attitudes of those who said they would start philanthropic activities or donate money after they accumulate assets. He argued that true charity should be done at any time, regardless of how much we possess, and that the use of surplus wealth for charity while living a luxurious life is a false charity.

Shinichi Suzuki, who served as the president of the Kinbara Forestry and Flood Control Foundation, described Meizen as follows: "While he was leading a frugal life in his private life, in his work, he worked hard for the country's economic development".

Both for-profit businesses and non-profit businesses were created as the result of Meizen's hard working and saving. The strong will expressed in his words "We can't do anything alone, but someone must take the first step" is an indispensable quality for every entrepreneur.

Under his management philosophy, Meizen ultimately aimed at creating public interests while he emphasized the economy. For him, businesses were not for earning profit, but a means of realizing public interest. With his ability in business, he might have been able to succeed as an owner of local conglomerate. However, Meizen ran a profit-making business in order to obtain the funds necessary to solve social issues.

Meizen was not interested in accumulating his own wealth at all, as his action of using his entire property for the Tenryu River flood control project showed. When the business Meizen established

started to take off, he gave it to others and started the next business. Many businesses established by Meizen left his hands, changed their shape, and have been succeeded to the present day.

Meizen pointed out the following four points were necessary for successful business:

(1) To have a right mindset, (2) Do not deceive or disturb others, (3) proceed with honesty, and (4) have good wisdom and excellent technology. Meizen's management philosophy had many elements in common with the Hotoku thought that permeated the Enshu region in Shizuoka Prefecture and had a great influence on the people who wanted to be entrepreneurs.

The characteristics of Meizen as an entrepreneur can be summarized into the following three points: (1) promoting businesses aimed at realizing the public interest; (2) emphasis on financial independence, and (3) moral sentiment controlling profit motives.

For Meizen, profit was only a means to realize moral beliefs. Needless to say, profits are necessary for the sustainable development of companies. However, business with excessive profits motives will cause adverse effects.

Today, we see scandals in many companies. Investigating the root causes of corporate scandals often leads to the lack of morality of managers and the pursuit of personal interest. It can be said that Meizen's point accurately describes the pathology hidden in modern enterprises.

(Table 3) Meizen Kinbara-related business

Type	Organization	Established	Business
Public enterprise	Chiga Cooperation Company	1875	Established as the Tenryu River Embankment Company to tackle Flood Control in the Tenryu River
	Toumi Konosha	1882	Breeding Western breeds of horses and cows
	Kinbara Forestry	1887	Reforestation project at the private forest in the upper Tenryu River basin
	Shizuoka Kanzenkai	1888	Established as a company to protect and educate ex-prisoners
	Hokkaido Kinbara Farm	1896	Reclamation and settlement in Hokkaido
	Kinbara Forest Conservation and Flood Control Foundation	1904	Started as the Kinbara Canal Foundation to work on Irrigation project by diversion of the Tenryu River
Profit-making enterprise	Tenryu Wood Co., Ltd.	1881	Lumber business
	Kinbara Bank, Ltd.	1884	Launched as the Tori Exchange Store to promote the banking business
	Nakaya store	1885	Bookbinding and printing, stationery sales. Transferred from Maruya Bank shareholders
	Maruya woodworker	1885	Sales of Western furniture. Transferred from Maruya Bank shareholders
	Izutsuya balm store	1887	Transferred from Kyoto Onoya, later became Izutsu Pomade Co., Ltd.
	Tori gumi	1888	Sales of special products of Hachijojima Island
	Tenryu Transportation Co., Ltd.	1892	Transportation. Later absorbed by Nippon Express

(Source) Created by author based on various materials

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¹ The Edo period in Japan maintained a hierarchical class system which ranked samurai(warriors) at the top, followed by farmers, artisans, and tradesmen. Among them only the samurai class were allowed to have a surname and carry a sword and ordinary people in other classes were not allowed. However, the Edo Bakufu (Japanese feudal government headed by a shogun) sometimes gave special permission to some tradesmen to use a surname and carry a sword. Meizen Kinbara’s case was a such case.

² Seinan War was the large-scale anti-government rebellion caused by Takamori Saigo and members of his shizoku (families or persons with samurai ancestors) in Kagoshima Prefecture in 1877.

³ It is difficult to accurately convert past monetary values to present values, but various efforts have been made to calculate approximate values using various price indices. One estimate shows the monetary value in the Meiji period (1868-1912) to be approximately 3800 times the current value. Based on this estimate, the total assets of 63,516 yen that Meizen donated is now approximately 241 million yen, which is equivalent to about \$ 2.2 million(1 USD is calculated at 110 yen) .

⁴ The Tonegawa river is one of Japan's largest rivers flowing from north to east in the Kanto region, including the Tokyo metropolitan area, and pouring into the Pacific Ocean.

⁵ For grasping the monetary value in Meiji era, please see footnote 5.

⁶ For grasping monetary value in Meiji period, please see footnote 5.

⁷ An official in the Department of the Imperial Household is called “Goryokake”



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法政大学イノベーション・マネジメント研究センター
The Research Institute for Innovation Management, HOSEI UNIVERSITY

〒102-8160 東京都千代田区富士見 2-17-1
TEL: 03(3264)9420 FAX: 03(3264)4690
URL: <http://riim.ws.hosei.ac.jp>
E-mail: cbir@adm.hosei.ac.jp

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