

# BORN SPREADS ITS WINGS

## 梵で世界に羽ばたく

KATOUKICHIBEE SHOUTEN BREWERY

加藤吉平商店



Bringing people all over the world together with Japanese sake and tradition

人の縁をつなぐ日本酒と伝統文化



Atsuhide Kato 加藤団秀

"I was a premature baby, born in December of 1957, in the havoc of the holiday season. It was a month before my due date, and I weighed only four pounds and seven ounces. My older brother passed away when he was young, so my parents had been eagerly awaiting another boy in the family, and I was raised with a lot of care. My father was a kendo athlete and a swimmer, so I have many memories of going to support him when he participated in matches and competitions."

"However, my father suddenly passed away from liver cancer at fifty-two years old, just as

I was supposed to start studying at a famous university in Tokyo, in April. My original plan had been to leave university in September to pursue a business and economics degree at an elite university in Boston, U.S.A., after achieving top marks in the entrance exam. I had intended to inherit the family business some time in the future, but I never thought it would happen so early."

"If I had gone through with my original plan to keep studying overseas, I don't expect I would have come back for another twenty years or so. I truly believed that inheriting the business at such

a pivotal time was my divine destiny. If I hadn't become head at that exact time, Katoukichibee Shouten might not have become the company it is today. Seeing as I took over the business more than twenty years earlier than I would have otherwise, I felt like my life had been fast-forwarded by twenty years."

"My study abroad experience in Boston got cut short. Having said that, my daughter, who now works at an airline company, had the opportunity to complete her studies in Boston. Seeing how she got to study in that same city, I was as happy for her as I had been for myself."

Popular at dinner functions for state guests and diplomatic events, Born is a sake produced by Katoukichibee Shouten, a brewery with a rich history of one hundred and sixty years. Currently, Born is served in one hundred and five countries around the globe, where it is praised as a sake that encapsulates the Japanese culture. On top of that, it has won first prize at tens of international sake-tasting competitions. We had the pleasure of speaking to Atsuhide Kato, the eleventh generation head of the company, who endeavours to promote Born and Japanese culture worldwide.

創業 160 年の歴史を紡ぐ加藤吉平商店の「梵 (BORN)」は、国賓歓迎晩餐会や国際行事で採用されるなど、日本の酒文化を代表する日本酒として世界 105 ヶ国で愛されています。世界的酒類品評会において数 10 回以上もの最高賞に輝く「梵 (BORN)」の日本の酒文化を伝道する十一代目 当主 加藤団秀さんにお話しを伺いました。

## INHERITING THE BREWERY AT 18 YEARS OLD 18 歳で老舗の酒蔵を継ぐ覚悟

昭和 32 年 (1957 年) 師走、出産予定日より 1 ヶ月以上早くに、あわただしい年の瀬に生まれた私は、体重が 2000 g 以下の未熟児でした。長男だった兄が幼いころ早世して、ようやく生まれた待望の男の子として大切に育てられました。父は剣道と水泳の選手だったので、その姿を応援したことをよく覚えています。

しかし父は、私が東京の有名大学の入学直前 4 月に、肝臓がんで 52 歳の若さで突然逝去。もともと 9 月からは、ボストンにある超一流大学のビジネス経済学部の入試に首席合格していたことから最初から留学予定だったので、東京の大学は中退の予定でした。そして、いずれは店を継ぐつもりでした・・・。

もしそのまま留学を中断せずにいたら、きっと 20 年以上は戻って来なかったはず。私とそのタイミングで家業を継ぐことになったのは、神様が与えた天命だと思ったのです。もしそのタイミングで店を継がなかったら、今の加藤吉平商店はなかったかもしれません。20 年以上早くに家業を継いだことは、自分の人生を 20 年以上大きくワープしたと考えました。

私のボストンの大学での留学は中途になりましたが、現在、航空会社で働く娘が同じボストンに留学した時は、まるで自分のことのように嬉しかったです。

## Research and recognising his father's brilliance

“When I joined the company, I had the opportunity to attend the National Research Institute of Brewing for around three years while beginning my work. At the time, I was still only around twenty years old, and an inexperienced youngster. Despite that, as the heir of Katoukichibee Shouten, my peers were very kind and taught me all sorts of things. I'm still extremely thankful for that.”

“On top of being a brewer, my father was a chairman of the Sake Brewers Association, and a judge for the Kanazawa Regional Taxation Bureau Sake Awards. Of course, I admired him a great deal, but I wanted to take some time to explore a different path in life. Back then, my dream was to do the research I wanted abroad, and then work there for some years before returning to Japan to inherit the business. I thought I would have plenty of time – ten, twenty years, even – until I would return home.”

“However, with the sudden passing of my father, I didn't hesitate to change my plans and focus on taking over the brewery instead. I believed that was my destiny by God.”

## 父の偉大さを感じる研究所時代

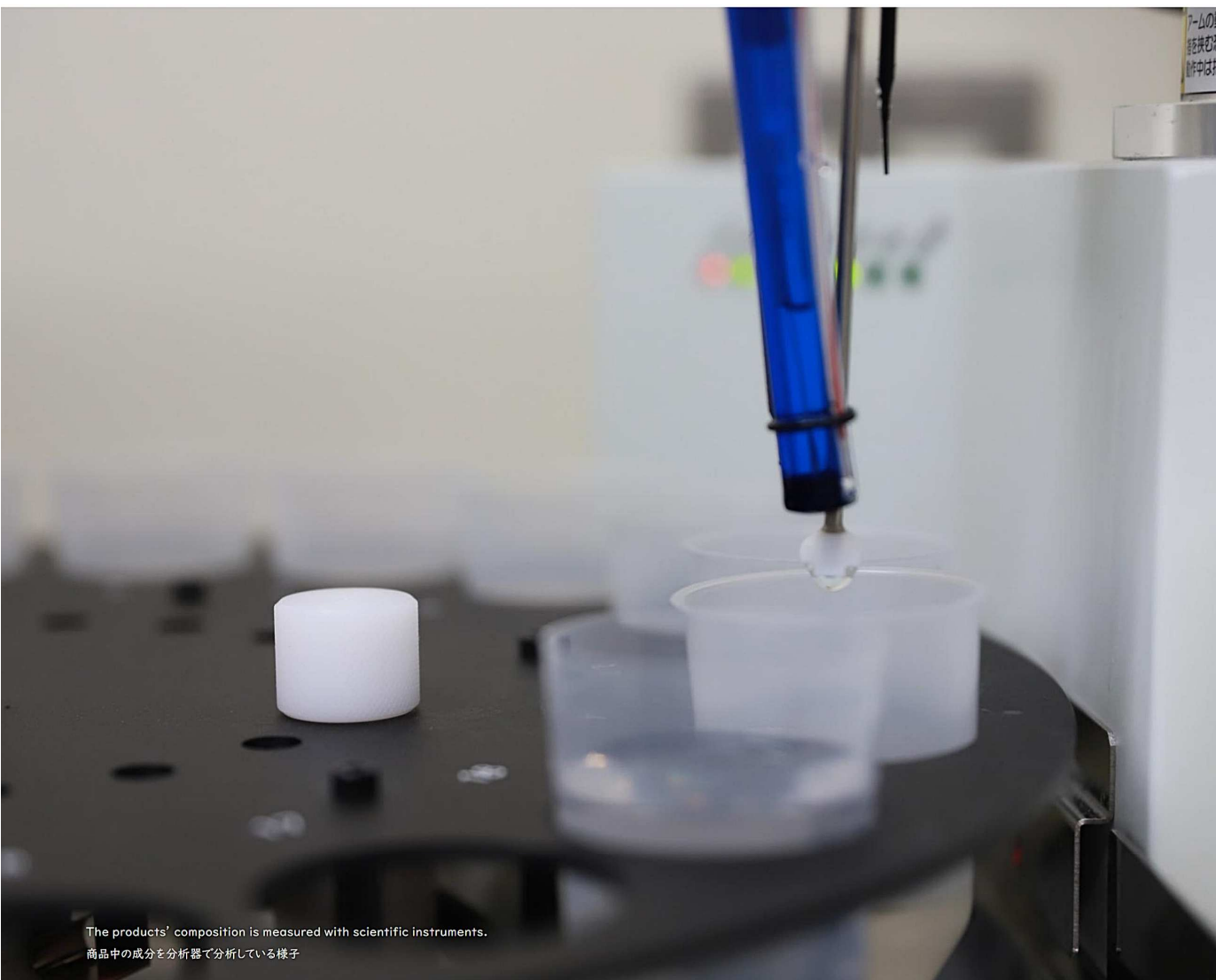
入社と同時に、弊社に籍を置きながら3年ほど、東京国税局醸造試験研究所に行かせてもらいました。まだ20歳そこそこの若僧でしたが、加藤吉平商店の跡取り息子として、周囲からは大事にされて、沢山のことを教えてもらいました。今でもそのことは非常に感謝しています。

酒造組合の会長や金沢国税局の酒類審査委員などを務めていた父親のことを、私は尊敬していました。しかし私は、一旦は父とは別の道を進んでみたいと思っていました。当時考えていた夢は、海外で好きな研究をして、10・20年ぐらいの海外勤務のあと、家業を継いでも遅くは無いと考えていました。

それが、父の突然の逝去により、家業を継ぐ決意をしたことは、私の天命だと思いました。



Some of Japan's most famous sakes, brewed by Katoukichibee Shouten  
日本が誇る加藤吉平商店の銘酒の数々



The products' composition is measured with scientific instruments.  
商品中の成分を分析器で分析している様子

## How a first-rate Master Brewer turns specially-selected, contract-farmed rice into delicious sake

We use carefully selected rice, pure natural water drawn from a 184-metre deep well, and our own yeast in order to brew our sake. All the brewery staff pull together to create the finished product. "Brewing sake isn't something that can be done alone. In order to deliver truly delicious sake, you need a chief brewer with good artistic sense and skill. I've also been supervising our brewing since I was in my twenties, but our current chief brewer is Akira Hirano (48). I first met him when he was in his twenties, too, when he came to our brewery from Kamaishi city in Iwate prefecture. I was charmed by his flair for brewing."

"Though he was young, I fast-tracked Hirano's promotion to chief brewer immediately. I told him, 'I want you to make the best sake in all of Japan!'. After that, he took the Nanbu Brewers' Guild Exam to qualify as a Master Brewer, and achieved the best results in the entire country. His success was even reported with a photograph of his portrait in the newspaper. Evidently, my eye for his talent was not mistaken. My eldest son joined an I.T. company for a while after graduating from university, but now he's also part of our company as vice-president. Working as a team with Hirano, he's doing a splendid job in supporting the brewery."

"We've been making additive-free junmai sake for around twenty years now. One of our brewery's most distinctive traits is the fact that we use only our contract-farmed brewer's rice to create junmai sake, and we brew it using our very own yeast. It all started when a close friend from my high school days asked me, 'why do you add extra alcohol to sake? Can't you just make it with rice?', and I found myself unable to answer right away, even though it was such a simple question. We had already been awarded the gold prize at the National New Sake Appraising and Deliberating Fair, but I thought I might try a new approach all the same. That conversation happened when we had just started selling our in-house goods on the global market. I became completely set on making the best Japanese sake in the world, using only rice as the base ingredient."

"Grains are something that everybody eats worldwide. Many say that rice is the most flavoursome amongst them all, and Japan's rice in particular is recognised all around the globe as having a delicious quality that cannot be beaten. Our flagship brand, Born sake, is made from specially-selected, contract-farmed brewer's rice (rice most suitable for making sake), which lets it bloom into a most delicious sake. I'm extremely proud to call such an exquisite sake ours."

## 優秀な杜氏の手が、契約栽培された、こだわりの酒米を、美味しいお酒に変える

当蔵のお酒は、厳選されたお米と、地下184mの深い井戸からの素晴らしい自然な水と、自社酵母を使って、蔵人全員で造られています。お酒造りは1人ではできません。そして、本当に美味しいお酒を造るためにはセンスと能力のある杜氏（製造責任者・ヘッド）が必要です。私自身も20代のころから酒造責任者として働いていましたが、現在の杜氏の平野明君（48歳）も20代の頃に岩手県釜石市から当蔵にはじめて来て、そのセンスに惚れ込みました。

「日本でトップのお酒を造ってもらいたい!」と、社内で飛び級で昇進させて若き杜氏（製造責任者）に抜擢致しました。その後、平野君は受験した南部杜氏認定試験において、全国で首席合格して顔写真が新聞にも掲載されるなど、私の目に狂いはありませんでした。

私の長男も大学卒業の後、IT会社を経て蔵に戻り副社長となって、今では杜氏と二人で、車の両輪となって酒蔵を立派に支えています。

当蔵は、20数年前から無添加の純米造りのお酒を造り続けています。契約栽培して頂いた酒米のみを使って、自社酵母で、純米造りのお酒を造っていることが当蔵の特徴です。



Brewer Hirano carries out koji mould culturing, an indispensable step in sake brewing.  
平野杜氏が酒造りに関する重要な工程である麹造りを行っている様子。

純米酒蔵になったきっかけは、私の高校時代からの親友から、「どうして日本酒にアルコールを添加するの?お米だけで造れないの?」という素朴な質問を受けて即答できなかったからでした。全国新酒鑑評会で金賞も受賞していたのに…。ちょうど自社製品を世界に売り出そうとしていたところでした。

「よし、お米だけで、世界NO.1の日本酒を造ろう!」と一念発起したのです。

現在、世界中で穀物を食べない人は居ません。穀物の中でお米は美味しいと言われていて、そのお米の中でも日本産のお米は特に美味しく最高品質だと、世界中で認知されています。その日本産のお米の中でも、特別に契約栽培して作って頂いた酒米（酒造好適米）で造っている、究極に美味しいお酒が当蔵のお酒「梵」です!と、胸を張ってPRしています。

Sake - Born

“When we design a product, we start by creating a story. This story relates to the effect we want the sake to possess. For example, our sake named Born: Dreams Come True was created with the intention to market a top-class sake that will remain relevant in the twenty-first century. It can be interpreted as a good luck charm for the customer, acting as a vessel for a prayer that they will have the power to actualise their dreams.”

“Alternatively, it can be a celebratory drink for those whose dreams really have come true. For those people, the hand-crafted one-litre bottle is designed to resemble a trophy, to represent how the drinker is the one and only victor of their destiny. For the same purpose, we made it so the bottle glitters a dark gold when full, mimicking a first-place trophy. The glittering effect disappears once the bottle is empty because, just like people, it’s impossible to shine without substance.”

“On the twenty-second of October 2020, The Japan Times featured two of our sake, Born: Chogin, and

Born: Wing of Japan, in an article about a national ceremony attended by the Emperor. That was an absolute honour.”

“Before the coronavirus pandemic, I used to travel abroad for business purposes more than seventy times a year in order to promote our sake overseas. At the moment, the market share of Japanese sake consumption in Europe doesn’t even make up one percent. However, that means that there is a possible ninety-nine percent to branch out into. I firmly believe that Japanese sake has limitless potential.”

“The reason I travel abroad so often is because I take staff there to enrich their training. Because of that, they often call me Wing of Japan, too. The thing is, if you don’t directly talk to people, you’ll never know anything about their inner character. You can find out a lot about someone via their body language and way of speaking, even if you’re only with them for half a day.”

Sake as a bridge to Japanese culture

“Until now, Japanese drinking etiquette has been mainly limited to Japan only, which is something I’d like to change. I want our sake to introduce Japanese culture to many people worldwide, and have them realise that sake is a must-have wine. For example, tea ceremonies were said to be very popular among many military commanders in the Sengoku period, such as Oda Nobunaga. Expanding our business overseas, I have a vision to educate people on how becoming acquainted with Japanese sake is a way to understand Japanese culture – just like tea ceremonies are.”

“Pouring each other a glass of sake shows that you respect that person. In fact, you could call drinking sake a microcosm of Japanese culture itself, as it’s focused on showing respect and gratitude to your drinking partners. Those values are repeated all throughout Japanese culture. Still, no matter where you are in the world, I think it’s important to show the people around you that you’re grateful to them, and that you acknowledge and respect them. Those principles always ring true.”

## A SAKE WITH A STORY

### ストーリーのあるお酒を造る

当蔵の商品づくりは「物語」を創造するところから始まります。物語が生まれる時には「こういうお酒を造りたい」というイメージが湧いてきます。例えば「梵・夢は正夢」という商品は、「21世紀に残したい最高品質のお酒を市場に出す」という目標が設定されました。

“Dreams Come True”「夢は正夢となる」という、ご愛飲頂いたお客様には必ず、多くの夢が叶う・実現するという祈願酒でもあります。

同時に、願いや夢が叶った時の御祝いのお酒でもあるのです。夢を実現した人は、たった1人の“Only One”の勝者なので、勝者に贈るトロフィーを表現した手作りのボトルにしました。大きさは“Only One”の1L。ボトルの色はダークゴールドで、お酒を入れるとゴールドに輝きます。まさに人間と同じで、中身が無いと輝かないのです。

The Japan Times 2020年10月22日号に天皇陛下の国事行幸記事と一緒に当蔵のお酒「梵・超吟」と「梵・日本の翼」が掲載されたことは、誠に光栄でした。

私はコロナ禍まで、日本酒をPRするために、1年間に70回以上海外出張をして参りました。しかし現在でも、米国はじめ欧州その他の日本酒のシェアは酒類全体の1%にも満たないのです。ということは日本酒には、99%の可能性があるとことなのです。日本酒には無限の可能性があると信じています。

「加藤さん自身が”日本の翼”・”梵の翼”と言われることもしばしば。海外に何度も足を運ぶのは、現地でスタッフ教育をしたいから。話してみないと、その人の中身はわからないですね。動作や他人に対する言葉遣いなどから、半日一緒にいただけでも、人柄や考え方が理解できます。

日本酒が日本文化と世界の架け橋に日本の酒文化はこれまで国内中心だったので、少し独りよがりの部分があったと思います。これからは日本を海外に紹介する上で、日本酒が最重要アイテムとして認知させたいですね。織田信長など戦国時代に活躍した多くの武将の嗜みは「茶道」だったと言われています。海外に日本酒を展開するとき、茶道のように「日本酒を知ることが日本を理解する嗜みだ」と思ってもらえるように活動したいと思います。

日本酒を酌み交わすのは「相手を尊敬する」という意味が込められています。日本の文化の縮図とも言えます。酒席での、相手に対する「尊敬」や「感謝」という所作が日本の酒文化そのものなのです。相手を認め、敬い、感謝するというのは、世界中のどんな人間関係においても最も重要なことだと考えています。



This special tanuki holds a Shiragaki-ware ceramic sake bottle.

When spoken aloud, ‘tanuki’ sounds similar to ‘excel beyond others’ in Japanese. Thus, the ornament symbolises a prayer for success in the business world, as well as the teaching of ‘sanpo-yoshi’.\*

It was gifted to the brewery by a head Oumi merchant.

この信楽焼の狸の置物は

「他を抜く」という音読みから、日本酒業界でトップになって欲しいという祈願と※「三方よし」の教えを込めた置物です。

近江商人の社長から蔵元に贈られました。

\*‘Sanpo-yoshi’, or ‘beneficial for all three sides’ is an Oumi merchant teaching of being not only content with seller and buyer satisfaction, but also placing great importance on having one’s business contribute to society. ※近江商人の「三方よし」とは、「売り手よし」「買い手よし」に満足せず、「世間(社会)よし」となるように、事業で社会貢献することが最重要であるという教えです。