

Changes in the development of the shogi piece industry

Handicraft era (Late Edo period to Meiji era)

During the Edo period, shogi pieces were made as a side job for vassals, but were not a business based on a reliable sales organization. Their production became an industry after feudal vassals were dispossessed of their stipends following the Meiji Restoration, especially the lower-ranking ones who lived in rowhouses, and had already acquired shogi-piece-manufacturing techniques through side jobs. Shogi piece making was started with the division of labor between woodworkers and calligraphers. In the Meiji era, some wholesalers started to appear, expanding their sales channels not only within the prefecture but also outside, centering on Tokyo. Shogi piece manufacturing in the early Meiji period seems to have gradually established its foundation as household industry. Tendo's shogi pieces until the end of the Meiji period were handcrafted mainly by woodworkers and calligraphers, and were only drawn pieces made for the masses compared to the mid-range pieces made in Osaka and high-end ones made in Tokyo. From the end of the Meiji period to the Taisho period, various machines for manufacturing the wood bases were devised, and when integrated production of articles began, local wholesalers collected the products and sent them to wholesalers in Tokyo and Osaka. However, once the middlemen purchased the products, they sold them all over the country under the label of their own shops, so Tendo was kept surprisingly unknown. The local capital at that time came from contract sales in the form of advance loans by the middlemen who also set the product prices.