Key word 1

# Alluvial Fan

## The 40.8°C Legacy of Yamagata City

Yamagata City is situated on an alluvial fan—a fan-shaped landform created over many years by sediment carried down from the Zao Mountain Range through the streams of the Mamigasaki River. The fan begins at its apex in the east and gradually spreads westward.Because this elevated landform was relatively safe from flooding, Yamagata Castle was built here. In particular, the castle town developed on the higher central and eastern portions of the alluvial fan, which became one of the geographical advantages of the city. Yamagata City is also located within a basin completely surrounded by mountains. As a result, it experiences a basin climate characterized by hot summers and cold winters.

In summer, the Foehn phenomenon often raises temperatures further, while weak winds trap heat within the basin. July 1933,Yamagata City recorded atemperature of 40.8°C, the highes atemperatureever officially recorded in Japan at This national record remained unbroken until 2007.

Key word 2

# Zao and Hot Springs

The Zao Mountain Range, located east of Yamagata City, is a volcanic mountain range formed through repeated volcanic activity. One of its most famous features is Okama, an emerald-green crater lake whose striking color and dramatic scenery have become a symbol of Zao. For centuries, the mountains were regarded as a sacred place of mountain worship and ascetic practice for followers of Shugendo. In 1925, ski slopes were opened in the area, and Zao gradually developed into a major tourist destination. Combined with the many hot spring resorts located at the foot of the mountains, it became recognized as one of Japan's leading ski and winter resort areas.

During winter, strong seasonal winds from Siberia carry supercooled water droplets that freeze onto the fir trees covering the mountains. As the ice accumulates, it forms large masses of rime ice known as "snow monsters" (juhyo), one of Zao's most iconic winter sights. Zao offers seasonal attractions throughout the year. In spring, visitors can enjoy fresh greenery and Minezakura cherry blossoms. In summer, the mountains attract hikers and outdoor enthusiasts. In autumn, the colorful foliage and mountain vegetables become seasonal highlights. In winter, visitors come for skiing, hot springs, and the spectacular snow-covered landscape. With its volcanic hot springs and rich natural environment, Zao continues to be loved as a destination that can be enjoyed in every season.

Key word 3

# Mogami Yoshiaki

The person most responsible for shaping the foundations of present-day Yamagata was Mogami Yoshiaki, the daimyo who ruled the region from the late Sengoku period into the early Edo period.



Over the course of a single generation, he expanded his domain to 570,000 koku, becoming one of the great daimyo of his time. On a national scale, he was known for developing Yamagata Castle, organizing the surrounding castle town, and promoting economic growth throughout the region.

Merchant districts established along the Ushu route, including areas such as Nanokamachi, continued to prosper throughout the Edo period as centers of commerce and production.



初市のだんご木

Even today, traces of Yoshiaki's city planning and the traditional craft culture that developed under his rule remain part of Yamagata's identity. Traditional Yamagata metal casting continues to this day. Every year on January 10, local markets and customs reflecting the city's historical foundations are still observed.

Key word 4

# Kajo Castle

Present-day Kajo Park is located in the center of Yamagata City on the former site of Yamagata Castle, where the ruins of the Honmaru (main enclosure) and Ni no Maru (second enclosure) still remain.

During the Sengoku period, the Mogami clan carried out large-scale development of Yamagata Castle as a hirajiro, or flatland castle. Surrounded by triple moats and earthen ramparts, it was one of the largest castles in the Tohoku region. During the Edo period, the castle and its castle town served as the political and economic center of the Yamagata Domain.

The name “Kajo” comes from “Kasumigajo,” another name for Yamagata Castle. This name originates from the Battle of Hasedo in 1600, where Yamagata Castle fought as part of the wider Sekigahara campaign. During the battle, enemy forces were unable to attack because dense fog (kasumi) concealed the castle.

After the abolition of the domain system in 1871, the castle was dismantled. Later, in 1897, the Imperial Japanese Army’s 32nd Infantry Regiment was stationed on the site, and the area became a military base.

Following World War II, the site was returned from military control and redeveloped as a public space where local residents could relax and gather. This marked the beginning of the Kajo Park known today.

Key word 5

# Mishima Michitsune



The second key figure who helped build the foundations of modern Yamagata City was Mishima Michitsune, a former samurai of the Satsuma Domain who became the first governor of Yamagata Prefecture during the early Meiji period.

In 1876, the former prefectures of Tsuruoka, Yamagata, and Okitama were merged to form present-day Yamagata Prefecture. At that time, the Meiji government appointed Mishima—who had previously served as governor of Sakata and Tsuruoka—as the prefecture's first governor.

Mishima reorganized the streets of Yamagata, which had become the new prefectural capital, and actively promoted urban modernization. He constructed new roads north of Nanokamachi, developed a modern government district, and relocated the prefectural office outside the former castle grounds. Western-style public buildings symbolizing the new era were built one after another.

The present Former Saiseikan Main Building is one of the few surviving structures from this period and remains a valuable example of the architectural modernization promoted under Mishima's leadership.

Key word 6

# Food Culture



Yamagata City is widely known as a “ramen city” and has ranked first in Japan for ramen consumption for four consecutive years.
At the same time, the basin landscape surrounded by mountains and the fertile alluvial fan terrain provide abundant natural resources. Since ancient times, the people of Yamagata have incorporated the blessings of the surrounding natural environment into their daily lives and food culture.



Many traditional vegetables are named after the regions where they originated, and local ingredients suited to Yamagata’s climate and soil have been cultivated over generations. In spring, people gather wild mountain vegetables, while autumn brings mushrooms and taro harvested from the surrounding countryside.



One of Yamagata’s best-known local dishes is imoni, a soy sauce-based taro stew made with beef and seasonal vegetables. In autumn, gathering beside the river to cook large pots of imoni together has become a beloved seasonal tradition and a symbol of community life in Yamagata.