

# The Japan Journal

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## Japan and the Internationalization of Science

### CULTURE



Okita Masato, president of Nissin Pharmaceutical Industries

are operating in the prefecture include Astra Zeneca, Bayer, Shiseido and Toyo Kagaku.

In the museum, an image of one of the earliest practitioners of the medical arts shows the monk-doctor as bearded and carrying a sickle as he roamed the hills looking for herbs and other ingredients. In 668, a garden was constructed at nearby Yokaichi specifically for the cultivation of herbs for medicines and when Ieyasu Tokugawa, the founder and first shogun of the shogunate that bore his name, was taken ill on a journey from Edo (former name for



A bottling facility for a popular line of health drink produced by Nissin Pharmaceutical Industries

Tokyo) to Kyoto, when he passed through what is today the city of Ritto, he was so impressed by the medicine that cured him he ordered that it be known as Wachusan from that time on.

### Self-Medication

One of the firms that has evolved out of the medical knowledge that has accumulated in the prefecture is Nissin Pharmaceutical Industries, which was founded in 1926 and is presently headed by Okita Masato, the great-grandson of the company's founder.

Okita is quick to emphasize the importance of a company with cutting-edge technology at its disposal places on its pre-industrial heritage.

"After Japan had been unified and the fighting between the different factions had stopped, the ninja turned their skills to collecting information for the government," Okita says. "Many of them disguised themselves as merchants to gather information, concealing their actions by traveling around the country selling medicines that they had developed here in Koka."

"This area is famous for the vast number of natural herbs and other natural plants that grow here, and that fusion with the skills and knowledge of the

ninja makes Koka the perfect place for the birth of Japanese medicine," he says.

Nissin produces around 160 products and adds as many as a dozen new medicines every year. One of its best-selling products is Akadama, a cure for stomach complaints that is based on a recipe dating back 350 years and includes pepper, ginger, lotus extract, herbs and cinnamon. Another product, again for stomach ailments, is in the form of a small sphere that is coated in charcoal—a trick that again goes back centuries to when it was first recognized that coating a medicine in charcoal protects the inner core ingredients.

The company is also famous for Tiotamin-D, an energy drink that makes extensive use of natural ingredients and has been a best-seller since it first hit the market in 1968.

"Our aim is to produce medicines that prevent illnesses taking hold," says Okita. "All our products are meant to be taken before a person is so unwell that he or she needs to go to the doctor. We want to promote the idea of self-medication as one of the foundations of a healthy society and we have a strong belief in our products."

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