

***Tonbai* Walls**

Tonbai walls exist in many parts of Arita, but the longest, best preserved walls can be found along the side streets of Uchiyama. *Tonbai*, a word of uncertain origin, refers to the fireproof bricks used to create the traditional chambered, climbing kilns (*noborigama*) that were commonly used in Arita during the Edo period (1603–1867). The climbing kilns often needed to be rebuilt or repaired because they gradually lose their structural integrity from the heat of the kiln fire. Since compromised bricks could not be used for new kilns, they were reused to create walls around potters' homes and workshops.

Many *tonbai* walls are covered with plaster and whitewash to conceal the repurposed bricks. The walls are also topped with tiles to protect them from rain. Without regular reapplication, the plaster wears away, exposing the red clay and the *tonbai* beneath. Recently, a movement to showcase the reuse of pottery in Arita's history has encouraged people to leave the *tonbai* visible. Along with bricks, pottery fragments, and old kiln tools can also be seen in the walls.

Although the walls once stretched for several kilometers, most survive only in short sections. With the advancement of porcelain production technology, *noborigama* kilns are no longer widely used. Thus *tonbai* bricks are no longer produced, which makes it difficult to build new walls. If damaged, the *tonbai* walls in Arita are rebuilt with salvaged materials and traditional bricklaying techniques.