

The Chimneys of Kuromuta and Ōbō Maruo

During the Edo period (1603–1867), the Kuromuta and Ōbō neighborhoods were part of the Sotoyama (“Outer Mountain”) area, west of the Uchiyama (“Inner Mountain”) area near Izumiyama.

Some of the oldest *noborigama* climbing kiln sites in Arita have been found in Kuromuta. Dating to the early seventeenth century, the Yanbeta kiln site was designated a National Historic Site due to its importance as a source of information about the development of porcelain production in Arita. Archaeological surveys in 1998 and between 2013 and 2015 suggest that Yanbeta was one of the first places where polychrome overglazed porcelain was made in Japan.

The Ōbō district is known for the brick chimneys that dot the neighborhood. Most chimneys date to the Meiji era (1868–1912), and they have been preserved for their historic and aesthetic value. As production methods changed from using wood as fuel, to coal and heavy oil, and then to gas-fired kilns, these chimneys became obsolete. Chokodani kiln, a single-chamber, coal-fired kiln built in the early twentieth century, was originally a shared kiln before becoming privately owned sometime before 1937. Soon outdated, it was left to ruin until 1998, when it was designated an Arita Town Historic Site. It was partially restored and is an important source of information regarding the modernization of porcelain production in Arita.