

Mino's First *Noborigama* Kilns: Motoyashiki

The Motoyashiki Kilns were the first three *noborigama* kilns built in Mino and some of the first such kilns to be built on Honshu. The first *noborigama* kilns in Japan were built in Karatsu, on the island of Kyushu. New kiln technology generally arrived from China via the Korean Peninsula, which was close to Karatsu. Although potters were typically protective of their trade secrets, the daimyo of Toki (part of the Mino region) had relatives in Karatsu, and a member of a prestigious Mino ceramics family was allowed to apprentice there. Surviving records indicate that this apprentice, Katō Kagenobu (d. 1632), returned home in 1605 and constructed the first *noborigama* kilns in Toki. The site of those kilns, now known as Motoyashiki, is part of Oribe no Sato Park.

In 1958, excavation of one of the Motoyashiki Kilns revealed that it had 14 chambers and was over 24 meters in length. In addition to being the location of the oldest *noborigama* in Mino, pottery artifacts unearthed there suggest the site may also be the birthplace of Oribe ware. The government designated the Motoyashiki Kilns a National Historical Monument in 1967, and many of the artifacts found there have been designated National Treasures or Important Cultural Properties.