

## Suzu Ware Museum

*(250 words sign at entrance to museum)*

Suzu ware is an unglazed pottery from the tip of the Noto Peninsula, with a distinctive dark gray color derived from its firing method. Pottery was produced in Suzu from the mid-twelfth to late fifteenth centuries before it all but disappeared.

### *Ancient techniques and influences*

Suzu ware vessels are made using coils of iron-rich local clay, beaten and smoothed into the desired shape. The pieces are fired at high heat (over 1,200°C), which causes wood ash to adhere to the surface of the clay, creating a subtle glaze-like sheen.

The technique is derived from Korean Sue ware, which came to Japan in the fifth century. The shapes and decorative styles of early Suzu ware were influenced by the pottery produced in Seto and Tokoname in modern-day Aichi Prefecture, which were among Japan's largest pottery production areas in the twelfth century.

### *Convenient trade routes*

Shipping was the most convenient way to distribute ceramics, which were both heavy and fragile. The location of the Noto Peninsula on the Sea of Japan trade route between Hokkaido and Fukui Prefecture was ideal for distribution, and by the mid-fourteenth century, Suzu ware was traded over a quarter of Japan.

### *A sudden decline*

In the latter half of the fifteenth century, Suzu ware fell into decline, and production was discontinued. Although the exact reasons are unclear, it is possibly the result of improved productivity and distribution in other production centers such as Echizen (Fukui Prefecture), Tokoname (Aichi Prefecture), and Bizen (Okayama Prefecture).

### *The rediscovery of Suzu ware*

Suzu's distinctive pottery was largely forgotten until an urn was excavated in 1951. Further excavations uncovered 40 kilns around Suzu. In 1972, potter Onodera Gen (1934–2016) started experimenting with Suzu clay to revive the traditional methods of making Suzu ware. Currently, there are some 40 potters making Suzu ware on the Noto Peninsula.

The museum collection includes examples of Suzu ware from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, along with contemporary works.