

Tokoname Ware

Tokoname is known as one of Japan's "Six Ancient Kilns," all areas with pottery-making traditions dating back over 1,000 years. Consequently, the city's history and economic development are closely linked to its pottery (Tokoname ware).

Conditions around Tokoname were excellent for pottery production. High-quality clay was in plentiful supply, and the soft soil and gentle hills made it easy to dig *anagama* (tunneled sloping kilns). In addition, its location on the Chita Peninsula allowed easy access to the ocean to transport finished goods.

Tokoname ware originated in the early twelfth century when potters began producing large storage jars and cooking utensils that soon found their way around the country. In the nineteenth century, techniques imported from China led to the creation of Tokoname's signature *kyusu* (teapots) made with iron-rich red clay.

The arrival of *noborigama* (climbing kilns) around 1830 facilitated the energy-efficient mass production of pottery. When Japan started rapidly modernizing in the second half of the nineteenth century, Tokoname produced roofing tiles and pipes for carrying water and drainage. Large-scale ceramics production peaked in the 1950s.

In recent decades, changing lifestyles and rising interest from overseas have led to further diversification of Tokoname ware. Artisans adapted to new tastes, embracing both traditional techniques and modern innovation to ensure that local ceramics continued to flourish. *Maneki neko* (lucky cat) figurines, bonsai pots, and red-clay *kyusu* are among today's most popular products.

Visitors can learn about Tokoname ware in detail at the Tokoname Tou no Mori Museum (part of Course B on the Pottery Footpath).