

Satsuma ware in the political context

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Ceramics were not produced in the Amami Islands during the early-modern period (from the 17th century to the middle of 19th century), so they needed to be obtained from outside the island. Hizen ceramics came from the North Kyushu (currently Saga / Nagasaki Prefectures), Satsuma ware from Kagoshima, and Tsuboya ware from Okinawa. Chinese ceramics also were brought in through Okinawa. In other words, the Amami Islands formed a distribution area consisting of three layers: flows from the north (Hizen / Satsuma), flows from the south (China), and flows within the island area (Tsuboya). Among the flows from the north, I will deal with the products of the Tateno kiln, a Satsuma domain kiln.

A domain kiln is directly operated by a domain, and its primary purpose was to produce tea utensils and daily necessities used by senior samurai, including the feudal lord; furniture, and banquet equipment at the domain residence in Edo (currently Tokyo); and tributes and gifts to the shogunate and other daimyo. The most famous was the Nabeshima domain kiln in Saga, which fired the Nabeshima ware that was considered the finest ceramics for the shogunate. The Tateno kiln of the Satsuma domain produced *Shirosatsuma*, a transparent glaze on a white body; *Sunko Roku-utsushi*, imitating Thai pottery; and *Mishimade*, where clays of different colors were inlaid. These were not easily obtainable by common people during the early-modern period.

Products of this Tateno kiln have been stored in the old families of Amami Oshima. The Nishi family of Ikomo on Kakeromajima in Setouchi town has been a *Yohito* (highest island official) for generations beginning in the latter half of the 18th century. Three *Shirosatsuma* clove boilers and one *Mishimade* clove boiler with black soil inlaid on white body, have been handed down in this family (stored in the Setouchi Town Folk Museum). A clove boiler is a small boiler that is used for deodorizing and moisture-proofing by decocting cloves and generating a fragrance. It is commonly seen among Tateno kiln products. The items of the Nishi family all used a fine white clay with delicate decorations.

Clove boilers fired in the same Tateno kiln have also been handed down in the Morioka family of Yamato village (stored in the Amami City Amami Museum). However, this boiler is covered in a brown glaze. The wooden box in which the clove boiler was placed has the year of Kaei 7 (1854) as well as the name of the owner, “Maebuni.” The Morioka family was a family of influential people in the region who also served as *Yohito* in the early-modern era, and Maebuni also became a *Yohito* in 1846. One *Shirosatsuma* bowl from the Tateno kiln has been also handed down.

There are similar examples in Okinawa. Double-handled jars in the *Mishimade* style from the Tateno kiln (stored in Kumejima Museum) have also been passed down through families who turned out many *Kimihae* (*Chimbe*), the highest rank of *Noro* in Kumejima. The

Noro was a religious authority appointed by the Ryukyu Kingdom and was an influential figure in the region.

The Tateno kiln products in Amami Oshima are likely to have been bestowed by the domain since the owners were local influential persons. The items of Kumejima were probably given through the Ryukyu Kingdom. Though these domain kiln products were made with precision and beauty, they were more valuable as domain kiln products and gifts from the domain. For people of influence, gifts are not only an honor but also effective in increasing the authority of the owners themselves against the background of the authority of the domain. For the domains as well, gifting these to people such as *Yohito* may have had political significance to smooth their rule over the islands.

Many of the early-modern ceramics were products necessary for daily life, such as tableware including bowls, plates; jars for storing liquids such as water; and mortar for grinding miso or sesame. At the same time, some were produced and distributed as symbols of political power and authority. The Tateno kiln products handed down in the old families in Amami tell of how the domain ruled the island at that time.



***Shirosatsuma* clove boiler handed down by the Nishi family in Ikomo, Kakeromajima (stored in the Setouchi Town Folk Museum)**