

Establishment of Ceramic Industries on The Northeast Japan Sea
Coastline in Medieval Times

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The establishment of the ceramics industry in medieval Japan offers one of the major themes of medieval archaeology, since it is possible to analyze in this the transition from the ancient society into the medieval society through an analysis of manufacturing technology and manufacturing form.

This paper intends to review, from an archaeological and bibliographical point of view, various aspects of medieval ceramics industry in its early development, especially through looking into the Suzu kilns on the noto peninsula, and their historical backgrounds, and in the same time to give a certain view into the question of regional difference between Eastern Japan and the Western Japan.

The main points of the paper may be summarized as follows:

1) Manufacturing technology of the Suzu kilns started as a hybrid of local and foreign techniques. It inherited the technique of local kilns that had survived the collapse through the 10th century of earthenware manufacturing system developed by the Ritsuryo state which had specialized in the manufacture of jars and pots. It was also influenced by Shiki kilns (unglazed ceramic ware) of the Tokai region and Sueki kilns (glazed ceramic ware) of the Setouchi region.

2) The Suzu potters had from the very beginning large ascending kilns permitting them to produce a fixed form and quantity of products including three main pieces and religious wares. Their kilns were in a directly opposite position to the Tokoname and Atsumi kilns, but the prosperity of the latter caused that of the Suzu kilns which covered a wide market of the south-west part of Hokuriku by water transportation.

3) The Suzu kilns gave rise to other kilns inheriting its techniques in Hokuriku and along the northeast Japan Sea coastline. These kilns operated during the early medieval years.

4) It is supposed that potters who contributed to the early development of the Suzu kilns were gathered and controlled by local manor officials of the class equivalent to Shokan who had under their control mountain forests and wide area trade and who operated these kilns as a part of their multiple production activities. These kilns were not subject to direct taxation from manor lords and may be considered as private enrichment activities.

5) The Suzu kilns functioned in the beginning as a part of measures to boost the economies of manors and governmental domains. They were opened originally to satisfy the needs of religious ware and materials for development required by newly rising local lords of that time, who were preparing for recognition and extension of their fiefs and privileges in provincial capitals or in manors or governmental domains. In this sense, a certain interrelation is found between the ceramics industry and the manor and governmental domains. While public power involved itself in the ceramics industry and promoted the passage to medieval production system in Western Japan, it remained an indirect relationship in Eastern Japan.