

Autumn 2025 Special Exhibition

The Blossoming of Kutani: The Ceramics Production Boom of the Kaga Domain in the 19th Century



【Overview】

From the early to mid Edo period (1603–1868), only a few regions of the Japanese islands were producers of ceramics. Around this time, the Kaga Domain (in present-day Ishikawa and Toyama Prefectures) was home to what is now called the Old Kutani Kiln. The kiln was not merely a producer of ceramics — back in the 17th century, this was one of the first regions of Japan to make ceramics with colored designs. There were other ceramics producers as well, such as the Etchu Seto Kiln in present-day Toyama Prefecture, but these production regions saw no significant expansion.

By the end of the Edo period, though, the proliferation of technology and the various feudal domains' industrial promotion policies had led to the establishment of many kilns throughout Japan, each producing their own ceramics. This included a number of kilns built in the Kaga Domain, as well as in its branch domains of Toyama and Daishoji. In more recent times, there has been a Kutani Ware revival movement, as local ceramicists make items with colored designs, items meant for everyday use, and much more; production has even spread north into Ishikawa's Noto Peninsula. In addition to showing items from these various kilns, this exhibition seeks to explore the actual state of ceramics production in what is now Ishikawa during the late Edo period, based on items unearthed from kiln sites and remains of castle towns, old documents related to the business of these kilns, and other various materials.

【Exhibition Details and Main Exhibits】

Prologue: The State of Ceramics in the Kaga Domain before the 19th Century

This section takes a look at items unearthed from Kutani kiln sites and remains from the castle town of Kanazawa, to get a sense of the state of production of ceramics in the Kaga Domain (in present-day Ishikawa and Toyama Prefectures) and distribution in the castle town up through the 18th century, before ceramics manufacturing became more widespread.



Ceramics Unearthed from the Shimohonda-machi Remains in Kanazawa, Mid Edo Period (Second Half of 18th Century), from the Collection of the Kanazawa Buried Cultural Property Center

Section 1: The Opening of the Kasugayama Kiln and the Revival of Ceramics Production

The Kasugayama Kiln, built in the outskirts of the castle town of Kanazawa, marked a major step toward the ceramics industries that developed throughout present-day Ishikawa in the 19th century. This section introduces the people who were involved with this kiln, and their efforts to revive the region's ceramics industry.



Three-Colored Bowl by Aoki Mokube, 1807–1808, from the Collection of the Suntory Museum of Art



Swatow Ware Bowl with Chinese Phoenix Design in Colored Overglaze Enamel, Late Edo Period (First Half of 19th Century), from the Collection of the Kanazawa Utatsuyama Kogei Kobo

Section 2: Production Takes Off with the Wakasugi Kiln

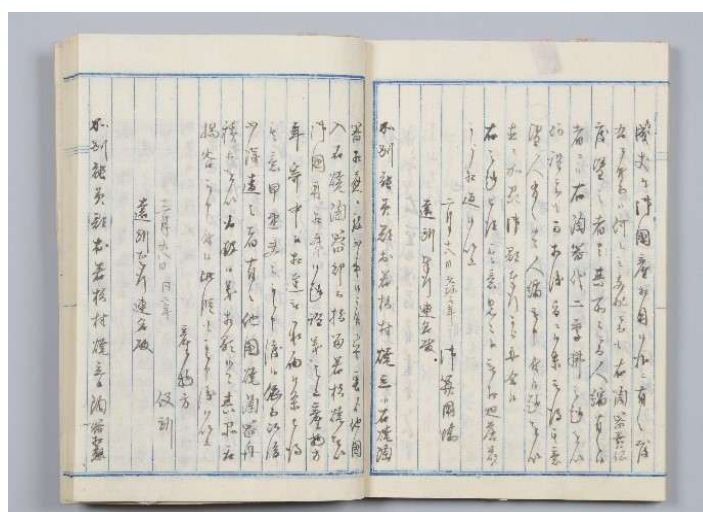
The Kasugayama Kiln seems to have been unable to reach the level of mass production of ceramics that they had initially hoped to achieve. On the other hand, the Wakasugi Kiln in Komatsu began to mass-produce ceramics in 1811, and the government of the Kaga Domain (present-day Ishikawa and Toyama Prefectures) provided production and distribution support, as well as their official blessing. This section focuses on pieces from the Wakasugi Kiln handed down to the present day, as well as items unearthed from the kiln site and remains from the castle towns of Kanazawa and Komatsu, for a better sense of production and distribution as it was at the time.



Ceramics Unearthed from the Wakasugi Kiln Site, Late Edo Period (19th Century), from the Collection of the Komatsu Buried Cultural Property Center



Incense Burner with Floral Celadon Openwork, 1825, Komatsu City-Designated Cultural Property, from the Collection of Raishoji Temple



Kokuji Zassho ("Excerpted State Affairs"), Copy dating to the Meiji Era (1868–1912; contents dated 1819–1820), Ishikawa Prefecture-Designated Cultural Property, from the Collection of the Kanazawa Municipal Tamagawa Library

Section 3: The Boom-Driven Expansion of Production Areas

In the Kaga region of southern Ishikawa, the 1824 opening of the Yoshidaya Kiln marked the start of a period of many kilns being established in the area, particularly from the 1820s through the 1840s. This even extended into the Noto Peninsula, to the north, where there had previously been no ceramics production earlier in the Edo period (1603–1868). This section explores the regional expansion of ceramics production, through the lens of items produced by these kilns.



Flat Bowl with Almanac Book Design in Colored Overglaze Enamel, Late Edo Period (First Half of 19th Century), from the Collection of the Idemitsu Museum of Arts



Deep Bowl with Dragon and Chinese Phoenix Design in Red Glaze, Late 19th Century, from a Private Collection



Large Flat Bowl with Mirage Design in Colored Overglaze Enamel, Late Edo Period (19th Century), from the Collection of the Suzu Ware Museum

Epilogue: Into the Meiji Era

The Meiji Restoration of the 1860s brought sweeping social and government reforms alongside the restoration of the emperor to the head of the national government. Many kilns across Japan had to close due to the loss of support from the now-abolished feudal domains, or other changes to society. In the Kaga region of southern Ishikawa, however, the ceramicists who learned production techniques at the various kilns in the area became a driving force, propelling the region to prominence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This section offers a closer look at items from this transitional period.



Large Dish with Dragon Design in Gold and Colored Enamels, 1865, from the Collection of the Tokyo National Museum

Dates: Sat., Sep. 27 to Sun., Nov. 9, 2025

Hours: 9:00 to 17:00 (last admission at 16:30)

Open 7 days a week during the exhibition period

Venue: Special Exhibition Room and Project Exhibition Room

Admission: Adults ¥1,200 (¥960), university and professional school students ¥960 (¥760)

- Free admission for high school students and younger
 - Prices shown in parentheses above are price per person for groups of 20 or more, or prices for visitors 65 and older.
 - Free admission upon presentation of disability certification or Mirairo ID, for holder and one accompanying person.
- Additional fee required for admission to the Kaga-Honda Museum.
- Electronic tickets are also available (with no designated date/time).

Electronic Tickets :

- Admission: Adults ¥1,200, university and professional school students ¥960

Notes

- Discounts (such as for visitors 65 and older) are not available with electronic tickets. To take advantage of discounts, please purchase tickets at the counter on the day of your visit.
- Electronic tickets have no designated date or time, and there are no guarantees for admission time slots.

Organizer: Ishikawa Prefectural Museum of History

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