

Industrial district of Arita porcelain in southwestern Japan : Its struggle for revitalization under the long-term stagnation of Japanese economy

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Industrial district of *Arita* porcelain in southwestern Japan: Its struggle for revitalization under the long-term stagnation of Japanese economy

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1. Introduction

There are a number of industrial districts in Japan as well as in Italy. One of the most important characteristics of industrial districts is agglomeration of a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which belong to a specific manufacturing sector and connect to each other in a vertical social division of labor within a locality of small scale. Another important characteristic of industrial districts is combination of competition and cooperation among local SMEs in a historical community, where economic behavior is imbedded in its social relationship¹⁾. We can find many industrial districts of these characteristics in Japan, for

1) Pyke, Becattini and Sengenberger (1990) contains some papers which describe the characteristics of the industrial districts in Italy. Although the expressions of the contributors to this book (Pyke and Sengenberger, 1990; Brusco, 1990; Capecchi, 1990; Becattini, 1990) are various and different from each other, the characteristics mentioned here in the text are commonly pointed out.

example, in the textile and cloths, the ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments, the woodworking and furniture, the metalworking and machinery, and the other manufacturing industries (Itakura et al., 1970; Yamazaki 1974,; Itakura, 1978; Itakura and Kitamura, 1980; Itakura, 1981; Itakura, 1985).

Almost all the industrial districts in Japan have suffered from severe depression since the beginning of the 1990s²⁾. It is also the case with the industrial district of *Arita-yaki* (*Arita* porcelain). *Arita* is a town located in northwestern Kyushu, which lies in the southwestern part of Japan, and well-known for its high-grade tableware and ornaments of porcelain mainly for Japanese-style restaurants and hotels as well as for rich people. The purpose of this paper is to describe the situation of this industrial district in the 2000s and innovative activities of the local actors struggling for its revitalization, and to analyze their effects on the cohesiveness of the district. This study is based mainly on my own observation on the spot and interviews with the local actors which I had between autumn of 2008 and early summer of 2010. Interviewees were executives or managers of twelve corporations of ceramic tableware manufacturing, directors of eight local cooperative associations, directors of two R&D institutes for ceramic industry, a vice rector of the College of Porcelain in Arita, and the persons in charge of promotion of porcelain industry at three municipal governments and at Saga prefecture.

First, I describe the declining trend of the industry of ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments as a whole and survivability of the industrial district. Second, I introduce the geography and history of the district. Then, I show innovative activities of the local actors for the survival. Finally, I point out that their activities are leading to fragmentation of the industrial district into some much smaller places, each of which has its own historical root in the feudal period between 17th and 19th century.

2. Declining trend of the industry of ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments in Japan

Fig.1 shows change of shipments value of ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments produced by all the Japanese manufacturing companies and change of number of these establishments between 1963 and 1979, and Fig. 2 shows changes concerning companies with four and more employees between 1977 and 2013. It is apparent that the industry was growing not only during the rapid-growth-period of Japanese economy until 1973, but also during its following years of the so-called low-growth period between 1973 and the beginning of the 1980s.

Although this industry stagnated in the 1980s and grew again during the so-called bubble economy of Japan between the end of the 1980s and 1991, it has fallen into long-term decline since 1991. According to Fig.2, shipments value especially of Japanese-style ceramic tableware has drastically decreased since 1997.

2) Publication of Kanto Bureau of MITI (1996) reflects the consciousness of crisis of industrial districts in Japan at that time. Articles in Ide (2002), Hatsuzawa (2005), Ueno (2007), Ueno and Seisaku Kagaku Kenkyujo (2008), Aoki (2008), Yamamoto and Matsumoto (2008) deal with survivability of industrial districts in Japan.

Industrial district of *Arita* porcelain in southwestern Japan

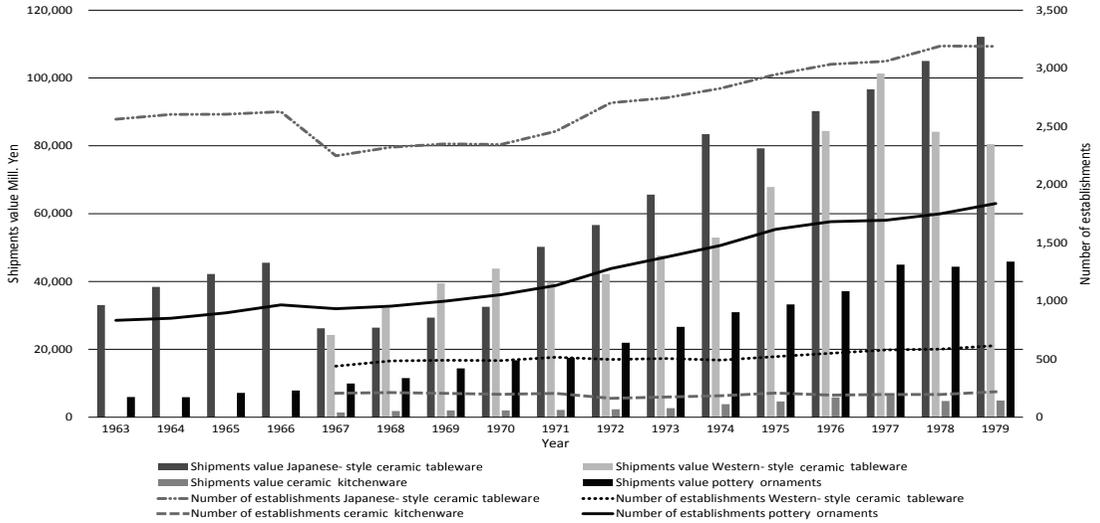


Fig.1 Change of shipments value of ceramic tableware and ornaments produced in Japan, and change of number of establishments producing these goods between 1963 and 1979.

Source: Census of Manufacture. Report by Commodities. Editions of 1970 and 1979.

Note 1: Western-style pottery tableware and ceramic kitchenware were included into the category of Japanese-style tableware between 1963 and 1966.

2: These statistics include all the establishments in Japan.

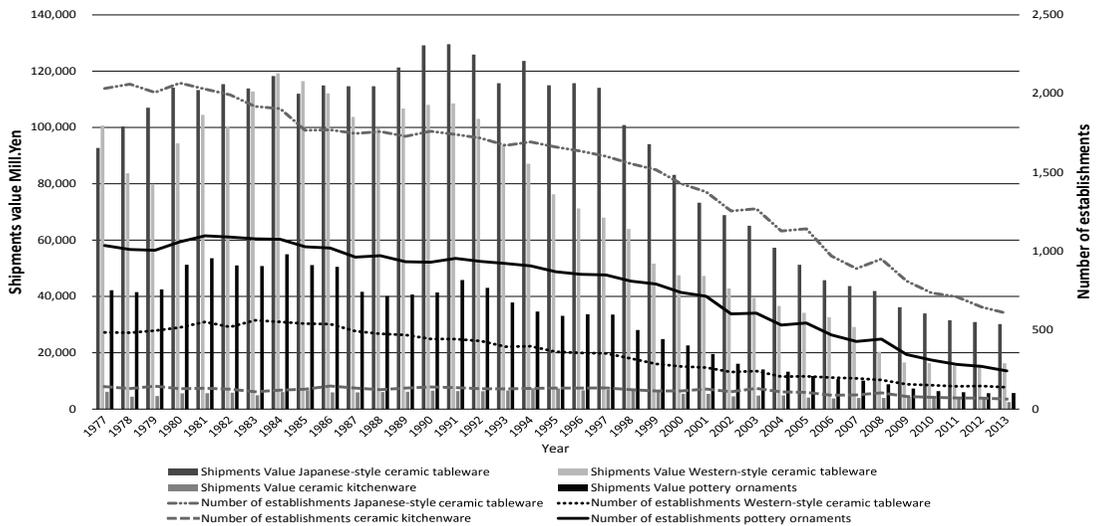


Fig.2 Change of shipments value of ceramic tableware and ornaments produced in Japan, and change of number of establishments producing these goods between 1977 and 2013.

Source: Census of Manufacture. Report by Commodities. Editions of 1981, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2015.

Note: Establishments with three and less employees are excluded in these statistics.

Western-style ceramic tableware has also recorded long-term decrease since 1991. It is also the case with pottery ornaments. However, the declining trend has been mitigated since around 2010. We can see that the number of factories and craft workshops manufacturing these products has been reduced by more than half since 1991, when the amount of the production recorded the historical peak in Japan³⁾.

Northwestern Kyushu, namely Saga and Nagasaki prefectures, also recorded drastic decline similar to the trend of Japan as a whole (Fig.3 and Fig.4). Northwestern Kyushu is the second largest area in the production of Japanese-style ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments in Japan. But the number of potteries in those two prefectures did not decreased so drastically as in Gifu and Aichi. The shipments value did not decreased so drastically in northwestern Kyushu in comparison with Gifu and Aichi. These two prefectures are located in the middle of Japan centered on Nagoya, two million city, and comprise together the largest area of ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments in Japan. We can find more survivability of the industry of ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments in northwestern Kyushu than in Gifu and Aichi, because the former indicated recovery in recent years.

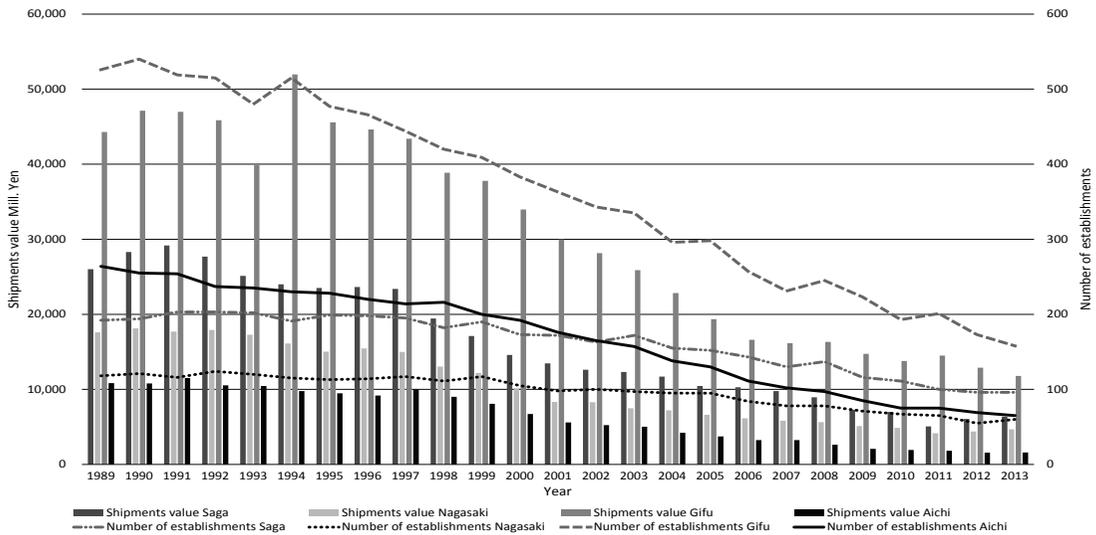


Fig.3 Comparison of Japanese-style ceramic tableware among four prefectural areas concerning changes of shipments value as well as of number of establishments between 1979 and 2013.

Source: Census of Manufacture. Report by commodity, each year.

3) In this paper, I will not deal with the reasons for decline of the industry of ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments in Japan. It is, however, sure that the globalization has affected it both directly and indirectly. According to my own interviews with a few actors in Nagasaki prefecture in November in 2009 and February 2010, for example, there is a wholesaler who imports cheap porcelains from China and Southeast Asian countries and exports now expensive one made in *Arita* in a wider sense to China. On the other hand, it should be noticeable that the decreasing number of the establishments does not always mean closure. Some of them may be categorized into micro craft workshops with three or less employees.

Industrial district of *Arita* porcelain in southwestern Japan

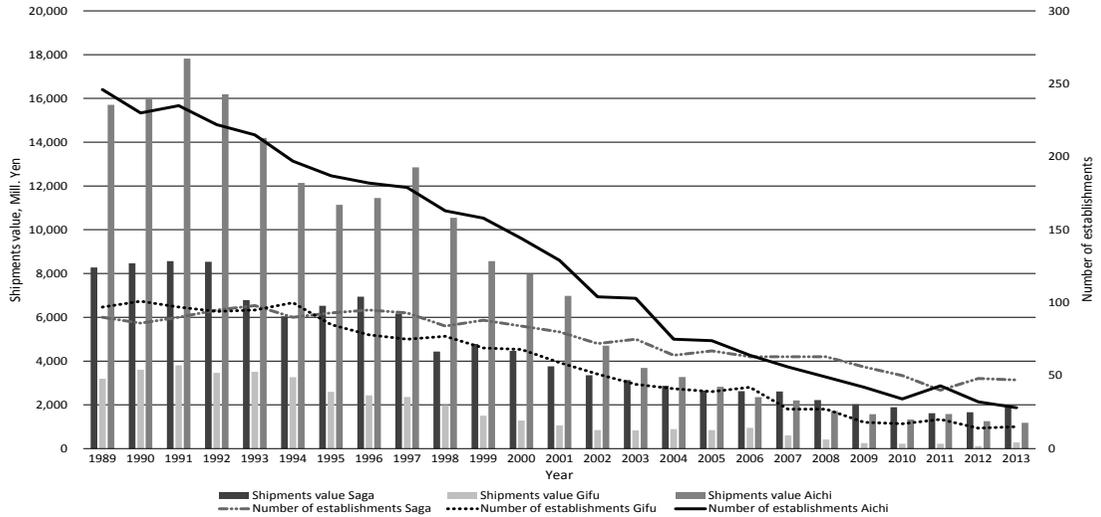


Fig.4 Comparison of pottery ornaments among three prefectures concerning the changes of shipments value as well as of number of establishments between 1989 and 2013.

Source: Census of Manufacture. Report by commodity, each year.

Thus, potteries in northwestern Kyushu have survived in the last ca. quarter century more tenaciously than their counterparts in Gifu and Aichi prefectures. This may be explained partly from the viewpoint of difference of urbanization. We may well, however, attribute the persistence of the industry of ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments in northwestern Kyushu partly to innovative activities of the local people concerned. Before I deal with the innovative activities in the *Arita* porcelain district, I introduce the outline of this industrial district.

3. Outline of the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain

3.1 Geographical constellation of the industrial district and its history

The place name of *Arita* should be identified with the municipality of *Arita* or *Arita-cho*⁴⁾ in Saga prefecture. This place name has become well known among Japanese people because of *Arita-yaki* or *Arita* porcelain, which is one of the most high-grade ceramic tableware and ornaments. But *Arita-yaki* has been produced in a much wider area than the municipality area of old *Arita-cho* as well as new *Arita-cho*.

This wider area includes not only old *Arita-cho*, but also former *Nishi-Arita-cho*, *Yamauchi-cho* in

4) *Arita-cho* was amalgamated with *Nishi-Arita-cho* in 2006, and the new municipality was named *Arita-cho*. Therefore, I use “old *Arita-cho*” for the former *Arita-cho*, and new *Arita-cho* after 2006. Although potteries were located also in *Nishi-Arita-cho*, this municipality was characterized rather by agriculture than by industry and commerce.

Takeo-shi, Okawachi in Imari-shi, Yoshida in Ureshino-shi, Mikawachi in Sasebo-shi and Hasami-cho⁵⁾. The latter two do not lie in Saga prefecture, but in Nagasaki prefecture. These places lie just in the neighborhood, but border on each other with hills and mountains. The industrial district of *Arita* porcelain is comprised of these municipalities and settlements including Shiota in Ureshino-shi, Saga prefecture (map 1). Porcelain clay is principally produced at Shiota, former independent municipality neighboring with former Ureshino-cho, which is located along the Shiota River and suitable for waterborne transportation of porcelain stone from Amakusa Island.

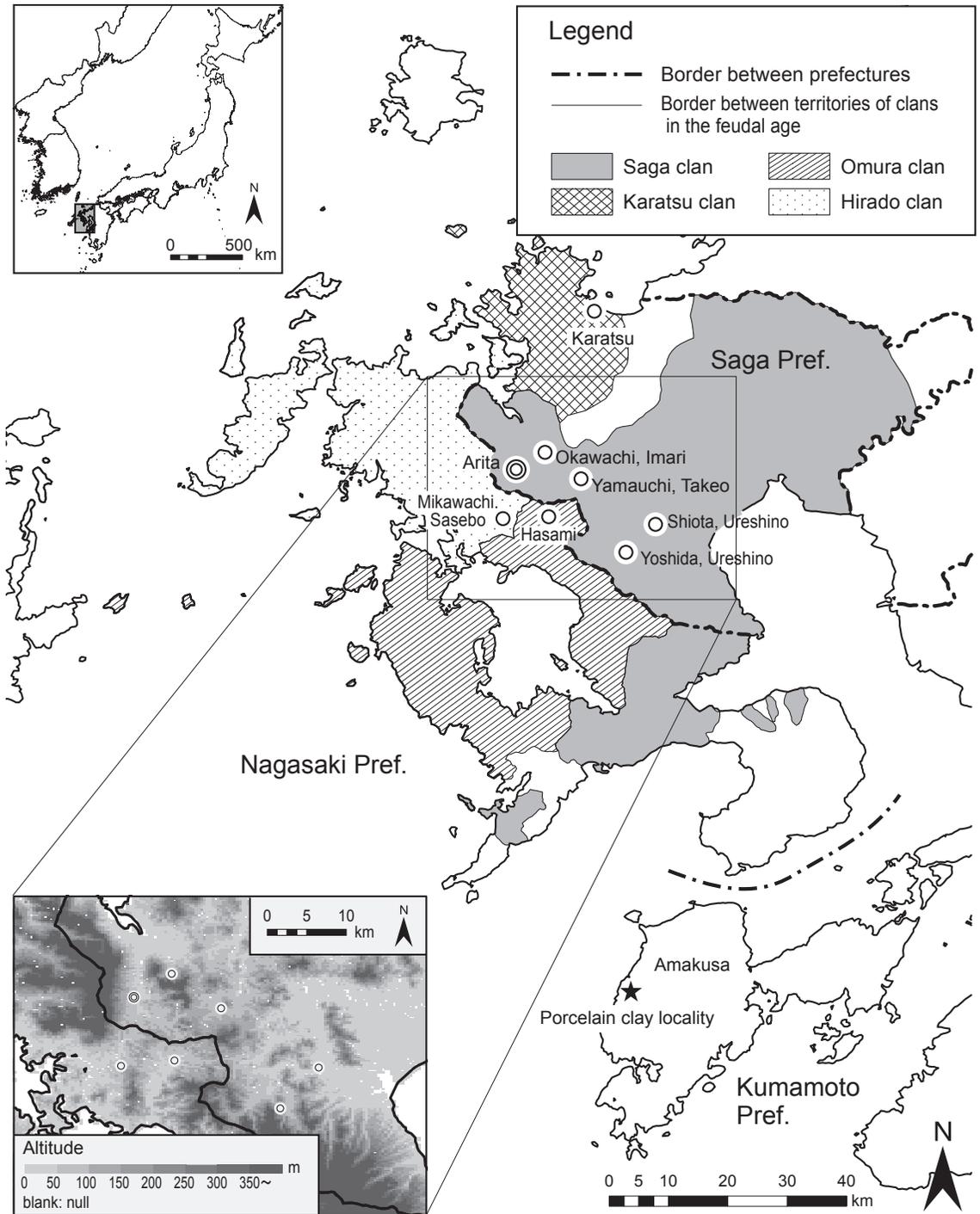
It is important to recognize that these places were under rule of different feudal lords until the mid-19th century. Arita-cho, Yamauchi-cho, Okawachi and Yoshida belonged to Saga namely Nabeshima clan (*han*), while Mikawachi to Hirado clan and Hasami to Omura clan. These feudal lords brought Korean potters as they came back after the invading war of Toyotomi Hideyoshi against Korea. The Korean potters searched all over the clans' territory for stone suitable for porcelain production respectively, and they finally settled down at Arita in Saga clan's territory in the 1610s (Editing Committee of the History of Arita-cho, 1985, pp.9-13) and at Mikawachi in Hirado clan's territory also in the 1610s (N.N., 1911, pp.5-7). It is not clear if the Korean potters really settled down at Hasami in Omura clan's territory, but the archaeology proved that porcelain manufacturing began at the beginning of the 17th century at Hasami as well (Ceramic Research Center of Nagasaki, without year).

In the latter half of the 17th century, potteries produced in *Hizen*⁶⁾ including the three clans' territories were exported from Nagasaki to Europe through *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (the Dutch East India Company). Potteries at Arita produced much more than potteries at the other places, and they were exported via the port of Imari under control of the Saga clan. Therefore, the porcelain exported from Japan to Europe was called Imari china in those days. In the three clans' territories respectively, there were potteries managed by the clan government as well as potteries managed by private persons. Porcelain produced by the clan's pottery was used to present the vassals of each feudal lord, other clans, the Tokugawa Shogunate, the Imperial court and so on. The Saga clan's pottery was transplanted from Arita to Okawachi in the 1670s, because it was afraid of the spillover of the excellent pottery skill at Arita to the other clans' territory spatially in very nearness (Editing Committee of the History of Imari, 1963, p.177). Arita, Mikawachi and Hasami were just neighbouring places to each other, bordered with mountains and hills, as mentioned above.

5) According to the Editing Committee of the History of Arita-cho (1988, p.277), ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments named as *Arita-yaki* are produced not only at old Arita-cho, but also Nishi-Arita-cho, Yamauchi-cho, Imari-shi, Shiota-cho and Ureshino-cho in Saga prefecture, and Hasami-cho and Sasebo-shi in Nagasaki prefecture. The name of *Arita-yaki* does not stem from the place of pottery production, but from the place of its shipping, where the wholesalers dealing with ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments are concentrated. As well known, *Arita-yaki* was called *Imari-yaki* before the beginning of the 20th century, because they were shipped from the port of Imari, where the wholesalers were concentrated. The railway was constructed at the end of the 19th century and the place of shipment moved from Imari to Arita (Editing Committee of the History of Arita-cho, 1988, p.276).

6) *Hizen* is the old name of northwestern part of Kysuhu. This old name has been used since 7th century and is still nowadays popular in Japan.

Industrial district of *Arita* porcelain in southwestern Japan



Map.1 Places in the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain.

Note: The concept of this map stems from the present author, and was drawn by Shinji KOYANAGI who was a former student at the Graduate School of Economics, Kyushu University, and is now a researcher at the Kyushu Economic Research Center at Fukuoka in Japan.

Yoshida in Ureshino-shi experienced a history similar to Arita, and in the second half of the 17th century, it developed to a place of ceramic tableware⁷⁾. Yamauchi-cho is a place just neighboring to the place of the first pottery and quarry of Arita at the beginning of the 17th century. Therefore, the existence of potteries at Yamauchi-cho is to be understood as spillover from Arita.

The potteries in these localities had their own brand name respectively before World War II. But as potteries at old Arita-cho flourished from the 1950s through the 1980s, almost all the potteries located at the other localities than old Arita-cho became involved in the social division of labor in the name of *Arita* porcelain. Porcelain stone was mined at Amakusa Island, and it was transformed to clay by local companies at Shiota. The porcelain clay was molded by the micro professional companies, which were located mainly in Hasami. While small-sized potteries and wholesalers who distributed *Arita* porcelain to Japanese restaurants and hotels were and are located mainly in old Arita-cho, bigger corporations either for pottery manufacturing or for wholesale were and are located in Hasami. The Hasami's wholesaler distributed ceramic tableware to department houses in metropolitan areas in Japan. Thus potteries in Hasami tend to produce porcelain for final consumer in large scale, while their counterparts in old Arita-cho for Japanese restaurants and hotels.

3.2 The situation around 2010

In northwestern Kyushu, some ceramic corporations produce not only as consumer goods but also as producer goods. There is a company specialized in manufacturing porcelain electrical supplies (No.2144 according to classification of commodity in the Census of Manufacture) such as Kyoritsu Elex Co. Ltd located in Nishi-Arita-cho⁸⁾, and larger companies such as Koransha Co. Ltd and Iwao Jiki Kogyo Co. Ltd produce not only beautiful ceramic tableware (No.2142) and pottery ornaments (No.2143), but also porcelain electrical supplies (No.2144) and scientific and industrial ceramic products (No.2145). Koransha is famous for its successful development of insulators and insulating tubes in 1870. Its products were adopted monopolistically for the telegraph and electric wire between Tokyo and Nagasaki, which began to be constructed in 1871 (Nakayama, 1980, pp.17-27). Koransha produces insulators still now not only for domestic but also for overseas market, especially Taiwan⁹⁾. Iwao Jiki Kogyo Co., Ltd occupies more than 80 per cent of the domestic market for acid-resistant porcelain for chemical industry¹⁰⁾. These both companies are also located in old Arita-cho, and employ 360 persons (Koransha)¹¹⁾ and 180 (Iwao Jiki Kogyo)¹²⁾ respectively.

Thus, products manufactured at the industrial district *Arita* porcelain are not limited to tableware and

7) See the following website of the Cooperative Association of Potteries at Yoshida.

<http://www.ktknet.ne.jp/yoshidayaki/rekisi.html>, accessed on 20th March 2010.

8) <http://www.kyoritsu-po.co.jp/>, accessed on 13th March 2010.

9) According to my own interview with a manager of Koransha on 18th August 2009.

10) METI and Agency for SMEs (2007, p.368)

11) <http://www.koransha.co.jp/company/>, accessed on 20th March 2010.

12) <http://www.iwao.co.jp/company/company2.html>, accessed on 20th March 2010.

ornaments. I concentrate, however, on these types of porcelain, because most potteries in this industrial district are specialized in these products, and social division of labour is highly developed for manufacturing ceramic tableware especially¹³⁾. In this field, there are three famous craft workshops in old Arita-cho: Kakiemon, Imaemon and Gen'emon. Masters of these three are descendants of the potters in the 17th century and produce works of art rather than goods for daily use. They are larger than almost all the other potteries in old Arita-cho not only in the amount of shipments value but also in the number of employees. Koransha and Iwao Jiki are, however, much bigger than those three famous craft workshops. Fukagawa Seiji Co. Ltd., which spun off in the 19th century from Koransha, is also a large company among Arita's potteries. The presidents of these both companies are related to each other by blood. While Koransha produces porcelain electrical supplies and scientific and industrial ceramic products as well as tableware and ornaments, Fukagawa Seiji concentrated in tableware and ornaments. The three famous craft workshops and the three bigger companies in old Arita-cho have their own distribution channel for their products respectively, while they may possibly sell their products partly through the distribution channel of the Cooperative Association of Pottery Manufacturers in Saga Prefecture, because they are its members (Cooperative Association of Pottery Manufacturers in Saga Prefecture, 1999, pp.36-39).

According to my own interview with the managing director of the Cooperative Association of Pottery Manufacturers in Saga Prefecture in November 2009, 150 local wholesalers enroll in this cooperative association as registered wholesalers. That Cooperative Association has a function of collecting bills from wholesalers and cashing drafts for potteries. The registered wholesalers are usually small and their power is much weaker than those three famous craft workshops and the three bigger companies, so that the products of these are not usually distributed through small wholesalers.

There are several other cooperative associations in the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain. The most important one is Cooperative Association of Commerce and Industry of Pottery in Hizen. As mentioned above, Hizen is an old regional name for northwestern Kyushu and includes territories of Saga and Nagasaki prefectures. Among those six bigger potteries, only Iwao Jiki is a member of the Cooperative Association of Commerce and Industry of Pottery in Hizen. And no potteries in Hasami, Nagasaki prefecture, are its members. On the other hand, bigger wholesalers both in old Arita-cho and Hasami, which are more powerful than the registered wholesalers of the Cooperative Association of Pottery Manufacturers in Saga Prefecture, are its members (Cooperative Association of Commerce and Industry of Pottery in Hizen, 2001, pp.26-29). This association also collects bills from wholesalers and cashes drafts for potteries, according to my own interview with the managing director of this cooperative association in November 2009.

13) There are a number of articles and books on the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain. Among them (*e.g.* Takatsu, 1969; Yamamoto, 1980; Industrial Management Institute of Kyushu Sangyo University, 1982; Kouno, 1984; Ooyano, 1990; Yamamoto, 1985; Haneda, 1991 and 1994; Tolliday and Yonemitsu, 2007), Shimohirao (1973) was the first book that dealt with this industrial district from the viewpoint of political economy. He refers to the development of social division of labour for manufacturing ceramic tableware in this district (Shimohirao, 1973, pp.61-68).

I had also an interview with the managing director of the Cooperative Association of Pottery Manufacturers in Hasami in November 2009. It becomes proved that this association also has a function of collecting bills and cashing drafts, and this function is generally most important among several functions of the cooperative associations in northwestern Kyushu. In other words, the cooperative associations play a role similar to bank, so that they know well which pottery is more successful and which is in crisis. All the managing directors said me that almost all the potteries in old Arita-cho and Hasami have survived the long-term depressed business situation in Japan since the beginning of the 1990s, but only with the drastic reduction of employees. On the other hand, the number of wholesalers decreased because of bankruptcy or no successors. According to the managing director of the Cooperative Association of Pottery Manufacturers in Saga prefecture, there were about 250 wholesalers in old Arita-cho at the beginning of the 1990s. But it decreased meanwhile to 150.

3.3 Promotion of tourism and landscape strategy for old Arita-cho

It is old Arita-cho that adopted landscape strategy first among several places of the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain in northwestern Kyushu. According to the former managing director of the Cooperative Association for Promoting Great *Arita-yaki*¹⁴⁾, with whom I had interviews in November 2009 and February 2010, it was in the second half of the 1970s that old Arita-cho seriously considered *machi-zukuri* or city plan oriented toward tourism promotion. Before then, the town authority and the local people hardly recognized the importance of hospitality to tourists for promoting the locality of old Arita-cho and for promoting the industry of ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments. The Kyushu Ceramic Museum in Arita and the Assembly Hall of Great *Arita-yaki* were constructed and completed in 1980, and signs on the road for tourists were provided in those days. On the other hand, lanes with fireproof brick wall symbolize the scenery of old Arita-cho. This brick stems from the kiln for pottery. Preserving this traditional scenery, old Arita-cho was selected as an industrial city with high tradition by the National Land Agency in 1983 (Editing Committee of the History of Arita-cho, 1988, p.625). Some bridges on the main street of old Arita-cho are decorated with dignified stones, and facades of traditional houses on the main road are well preserved still now. The scenery might well be reconstructed in the 1980s.

The number of tourists increased from 1,600 thousand per year in the 1990s to 2,000 thousand in the 21st century and the famous festival market called as *Arita Toki Ichi*, which is held from 29th April through 5th May yearly, gathered about 700 thousand visitors in the 1990s (*Asahi Shinbun*, 30.4.1997), but more than one million in the 21st century (Arita-cho, 2005, p.26; 2009, p.25). Therefore, landscape strategy of old Arita-cho

14) In Japanese, it is called *Dai Arita-yaki Shinko Kyodo Kumiai*. *Dai* means great. It is, however, to be interpreted that *Dai* or great means the geographic area where porcelain of Arita style are produced. If so, the name must be translated as Cooperative Association for Promoting *Arita-yaki* in Greater Area. In fact, it is written in the Article 3 of the Statutes of the Cooperative Association that the area of this association is the same of the territory of Saga prefecture (Editing Committee of the History of Arita-cho, 1988, p.602). Nevertheless it does not coincide with the historical fact that Hasami and Mikawachi in Nagasaki prefecture have played an important role for producing *Arita-yaki* or *Arita* porcelain.

seems to be somewhat successful¹⁵). Nevertheless, the crisis of the industry of ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments has become more and more serious, and only the landscape strategy does not help for potteries and wholesalers to get rid themselves of the crisis.

4. Innovative activities in the era of decline of the industrial district

Despite the long-term depression, there are potteries that have been able to keep their employees and the amount of sale in the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain. Among eight potteries, with executives of which I had interviews, three are the case, and one could even increase from the beginning of the 21st century. According to the executive of this pottery, the place, where this has been located since long ago, has been most vigorous among industrial districts in Japan at least in the 21st century. These are attributable to innovative activities of local actors. In this chapter, I describe some cases of the innovative activities in the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain.

4.1 Cases at Hasami in Nagasaki¹⁶)

Hakusan Toki Co. Ltd. is one of typical cases of innovative activities among pottery companies at Hasami. This company is the first to employ a designer, Mr. Masahiro Mori, for porcelain tableware. He was already employed in the 1950s and became very famous, because the ceramic tableware he designed was modern and good for use to common people at home and this was sold very well. He won several prizes and became professor of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Kyushu Sangyo University in Fukuoka in 1974, and gave lecture also at some other universities for art. He thought that ceramic tableware should be functionally good or suitable for the use, have a beautiful shape and be able to be manufactured by means of mass production method, so that the price should be fair and affordable for common people. He retired Hakusan Toki at the end of the 1970s, but continued to advise succeeding designers of this company after his retirement in the 1980s and the 1990s as well.

Thus this company represented the rise of *Hasami-yaki* in the 1970s and the 1980s. It had more than 200 employees at the beginning of the 1980s and the turnout per year amounted to more than 1000 million yen.

15) There was and still now is a voice among persons concerned in old Arita-cho that the skill of porcelain would decline, if one would depend on the cash inflow from tourists. Most tourists to the Arita porcelain market in spring buy discounted pieces of porcelain with some minor problems. Normal consumers become to be satisfied with not really high-grade porcelains. Potteries would also become satisfied with cash inflow and become not to make every effort for improvement of their skills. This thinking lies in the background of that voice. I heard this voice, for example, in my own interview with managing director of the Cooperative Association of Commerce and Industry of Pottery in Hizen in November 2009.

16) The description of this section is mainly based on my own interview with the executive of Hakusan Toki Co., Ltd. at Hasami, Nagasaki prefecture, which was held on 19th August, 2009. I had interviews also with some potters at Hasami as well as with a manager of the Cooperative Association of Potteries at Hasami in 2009 and 2010. The general description about ceramic tableware manufactured at Hasami is based also on these interviews. By the way, Ueno et al (2009) deals with the revitalization of Hakusan Toki Co., Ltd.

However, it faced the depression in the 1990s as well, and the number of employees became less than seventy and the sale fell to less than 400 million yen at the end of the 1990s.

However, the year of 1998 became a major turning point for Hakusan Toki. It participated in the tableware fare held in Tokyo in this year, because a pottery company at Yoshida asked the executive of Hakusan Toki to participate together in the fare. This tableware fare is held nine day long and about 300 thousand persons visit every year. Many visitors to this fare asked the executive of the company if he had not opened his own booth in the year before 1998. That means that many visitors to this tableware fare are repeaters and their eyes are good for evaluating ceramic tableware. He experienced direct voices of such final consumers for the first time. He also opened a booth in the tableware fare in 1999. After this, many telephone calls came to this company from Tokyo, namely from interior companies, boutique shops and the other types of consumer service industries. He realized that these service industries were new markets for the company and he could listen to their voices directly. Responding to these, the company could recover the amount of sale. It opened a shop at the downtown of Tokyo in 2003, and mass media for ladies reported about this shop and the company. In the following year, public relations magazines of large corporations reported about this company one after another. Thus the sales recovered to more than 600 million yen and the number of employees became about 100 at the end of the 2000s. Ten per cent of the employees are designers, but they are also engaged in production management and production *per se*.

Potteries at Hasami have found another market for their own products. According to the director of the Cooperative Association of Potteries at Hasami, successful potteries respond to the strategy of large famous corporations, for example in the food industry, located in Tokyo. Such large corporations make their customers a premium gift in order to enclose or keep them as their own regular customers. Porcelain tableware is often selected as the gift item. Designing companies in Tokyo subcontract for implementing this strategy of large corporations, and make a plan what kind of goods is suitable for the gift. If they have an idea that some porcelain goods are appropriate for a gift to the customers for a large food corporation, they try to transact with wholesalers and potters at Hasami, because the gift should be produced in bulk but with high skill. Hasami is a place in Japan, where ceramic tableware manufacturers have capability to respond such demand. It is impossible for potteries at old Arita-cho and Okawachi to do so. The scale of batch of such goods amounts to between 200 and 500 thousand.

There has emerged furthermore a different market for porcelain tableware produced at Hasami, according to the director of the Cooperative Association of Potteries at Hasami. While Japanese luxury restaurants and hotels experience depression, Japanese fast-food chain restaurants flourish. These fast-food restaurants need their own tableware. Potteries at Hasami also respond to the need of the fast-food restaurant chains. There are also potteries at Hasami, which supply porcelain tableware with “large item, small scale” production to variety stores in metropolises.

4.2 Cases at Okawachi in Saga¹⁷⁾

At Okawachi in Imari-shi, the local potteries have been involved in tourism development since the 1980s. The landscape of Okawachi has been reorganized especially since the beginning of the 1990s. The local potteries hold event for tourists in every season, namely spring, summer, autumn and winter, and sell porcelain made by themselves directly to tourists in their own shops respectively as well as in the hall of the Cooperative Association “*Imari-Nabeshima-yaki*”.

All the potters at Okawachi once depended on the wholesalers at old Arita-cho or at Hasami and made porcelain tableware and ornaments of the brand name “*Arita-yaki*” until the mid-1990s. The Cooperative Association “*Imari-Nabeshima-yaki*” was founded in 1976. Its main task is not banking, but promotion of the new brand name of “*Imari-Nabeshima-yaki*”. The potters are very proud of their high skill, because they are descendants of the official potters for Nabeshima clan. They believe that the tradition of pottery at Okawachi is much more refined than that at old Arita-cho. Therefore they invented a new brand name “*Imari-Nabeshima-yaki*”. They discovered and created the history of “*Imari-Nabeshima-yaki*” as described below.

This change is caused partly through a landscape strategy for Okawachi in Imari by the local potteries. According to the chairman of the board of directors of the Cooperative Association “*Imari-Nabeshima-yaki*”, a terrible flood struck Okawachi in 1967, so that many of potteries were relocated from this village to a newly constructed industrial estate on a downstream plain of Imari after that flood. There remained only a few potteries in the village. However, at some time, the national broadcasting of TV or NHK introduced Okawachi as a home village of secret pottery in its series of New Travel Sketch of Japan (*Shin Nihon Kiko*). And the Cooperative Association “*Imari-Nabeshima-yaki*” have held a festival market of porcelain between 1st and 5th April yearly since 1975 or one year before its foundation. In the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, the road from the city center of Imari to Okawachi was not paved and so narrow as one lane that there happened terrible traffic jam.

A project of keeping up of landscape including road construction was launched by both the prefecture and the municipal governments at the beginning of the 1980s, utilizing partly the national project for promoting regional and local economies by the Ministry of Home Affairs, thus by means of subsidy from the national government. The Assembly Hall for the Traditional Industry of Imari-Arita Porcelain Manufacturing was constructed in 1980. The Park of the Nabeshima-clan pottery was constructed between 1981 and 1984. The road was widened and paved around 1985. The construction for improvement of the landscape of Okawachi was conducted between 1991 and 1993. 1,350 Million Yen was invested for these construction works between 1980 and 2000 (Division of Urban Development in the Department of Construction of Imari municipality, 2010, p.1). The Cooperative Association also constructed its own assembly hall, in which there are souvenir

17) The description of this section is mainly based on my own interviews with the chairman of the board of directors of the Cooperative Association “*Imari-Nabeshima-yaki*” at Okawachi in Saga prefecture as well as an executive of an innovative potter, Hataman Toen Co., Ltd. The present author had these interviews with them on 20th August, 2009.

and coffee shops, at the entrance of the village.

According to the city authority¹⁸⁾, the number of tourists to Okawachi was under 500 thousand per year in 1998, but amounted to about 750 thousand in 2003 (Division of Urban Development in the Department of Construction of Imari municipality, 2010, p.5). Although it has fluctuated between 600 and 700¹⁹⁾, it is sure that Okawachi can steady get tourists mainly from the Fukuoka metropolitan area. It is also sure that more than thirty or forty thousand tourists steady visit the potteries' market at the beginning of April. The Cooperative Association has held also another festival market for tourists in November since 1984 and can get so many visitors as in April. It has held *Hiina* matsuri (doll's festival) in February and March since 2006, and *Furin* matsuri (wind-bell festival) from end of June to August since 2005.

The Cooperative Association at Okawachi intentionally created news about their porcelain by means of holding an event of tribute of super luxury *Imari-Nabeshima-yaki* to governor of prefectures and mayors, in the city of whom there is a feudal castle, since 1989. This event is celebrated in the style of the feudal age ceremony. The executives of the potteries at Okawachi dress in the traditional Japanese clothes or *kimono* (*Haori* and *Hakama*) at the event, as the feudal lord of Nabeshima presented Tokugawa Shogunate, the Imperial court and others Imari porcelain as a gift between the 17th and 19th centuries. The people may become to know and recognize through the broadcasting that the Imari-Nabeshima porcelain is different from *Arita-yaki*. This ceremony can arouse people's talk about "*Imari-Nabeshima-yaki*".

As described above, all the potteries in Okawachi produced their goods as *Arita-yaki* and sold them to the wholesalers at Arita and at Hasami probably until the mid-1990s, the share of the direct sale to tourists especially in the occasions of festival markets to the total earning has grown since then. The chairman of the board of directors of the Cooperative Association sells 50 per cent of his own porcelain products directly to tourists, and there are potteries which sell more than 90 per cent of his products to tourists, according to him. He also said that employees at a pottery decreased from more than twenty to several because of reduction of production in physical term, but that income for a pottery remains so high as before, because it can sell porcelain consumers directly. Therefore, potteries at the other places in northwestern Kyushu should be envious of the success of the potteries at Okawachi, because they can get cash earnings through tourism. Only 31 potteries at Okawachi, of which 24 are members of the Cooperative Association "*Imari-Nabeshima-yaki*", can sell more than 40 thousand visitors in five days. If they buy porcelain of 2000 yen in average, potteries at Okawachi can get 80,000 thousand yen only in five days²⁰⁾.

18) The present author had this interview on 23rd February, 2010.

19) This estimate of the number of tourists to Okawachi may be exaggerated, because one tourist might be counted twice and sometimes more. For example, 276 thousand tourists visited the Assembly Hall of Imari-Nabeshima Porcelain Manufacturing, and 264 thousand visited the Park of Nabeshima-Clan, and 65 thousand visited the Hall of Traditional Industry of Imari-Arita-yaki in 2008, according to the Division of Urban Development in the Department of Construction of Imari municipality (2010, p.5). These numbers and the other two numbers of tourists to potteries' market in spring (43 thousand) and Autumn Festival of the Kirm of Nabeshima clan (40 thousand) were simply added to get the number of visitors of this year.

It is remarkable that an active entrepreneur of pottery leads activities of the Cooperative Association “*Imari-Nabeshima-yaki*”. He does not, however, depend on the tourism solely. He has challenged eagerly to revive the traditional high-skill and specialized his manufacturing in high value-added luxury goods, for example, bottle for perfume. He has challenged to destroy the existing traditional distribution channel. He transacted with ca. 200 wholesalers by the mid-1990s, but reduced three wholesalers by 2003. This leads to rise of the wholesale price and the margin for the potter has sharply risen. The number of employees of his company is 20 and this number has not been changed since the 1990s. It means that depression of Japanese economy does not matter his business. It is impressive that he said me that “if our locality could not survive, my potter could not survive as well.”

4.3 Cases at Arita-cho in Saga

According to an executive of a pottery at old Arita-cho²¹⁾, who was very successful around 1990, fourteen potters in this town developed a new style of bowls for Chinese noodle in the years between 2003 and 2004, namely in the middle of crisis for *Arita-yaki*. This invention of *Arita-yaki* not for traditional Japanese dish but for the Japanese masses was stimulated by a director of NHK, which is the public broadcasting corporation in Japan. Only one local wholesaler deals with this type of bowls monopolistically. This project, in which that executive of the pottery was also involved, was successful. However, it was not sold well for longer years. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the stimulus came from outside of the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain and local potters cooperated with each other.

At the same time, a manager of a small company, which produces corrugated cardboard for packaging Arita porcelain, developed an idea of a luxury kaleidoscope, a tube of which is made of Arita porcelain²²⁾. He did not, however, have no relationship with Arita porcelain, before he moved from Osaka to Arita in 2001, in order to help his mother-in-law manage the small cardboard company. His idea was realized between 2003 and 2004 in the collaboration with a famous kaleidoscope master living in Tokyo, two local famous pottery companies with long tradition, a glass manufacturing company in Saga-shi and so on with subsidy granted by Saga prefecture. The turnover of 3000 pieces of the kaleidoscope amounted to ca. 120 million yen in the first year, namely 2004. The average price was 40,000 yen. Its turnover fell in the second year, but has risen since 2006.

In 2005, the manager of the cardboard company had gotten another idea to make a luxury fountain pen, a tube of which is made of Arita porcelain. He collaborated with a large corporation of fountain pen manufacturing and a famous stationary shop, both of whose headquarters are located in Tokyo. At old

20) The average sales per person dropped from 3000 yen to 2000 yen at the end of the 2000s in comparison to twenty years ago according to the chairman of the board of directors of the Cooperative Association.

21) The present authors had an interview with the executive of this pottery in July 2010.

22) The present authors had an interview with this manager in November 2009.

Arita-cho, two local famous pottery companies developed the tube for the fountain pen again. The Japanese government adopted it as a gift from Premier Minister of Japan to the presidents and premier ministers participated in the G7 summit at Hokkaido in Japan in July 2007. And then it began to be sold in the market and 1500 pieces were sold in five months after the sales beginning. The price of the fountain pen is between 150 and 250 thousand yen.

These two episodes tell us that the idea came from an outsider of the traditional porcelain world in Arita. It was possible to realize the idea in collaboration with famous corporations which have had no relationship with porcelain. It was also important to make talks about the luxury goods by means of the world event G7.

In old Arita-cho, there is another innovative activity. Younger wholesalers in Arita have developed new goods of porcelain for final consumers every year since 2005. These new goods are named as series of “*Takumi no kura*”, namely “warehouse of skillful craftsmen”. As mentioned before, the luxury Arita porcelain for tableware has been mainly sold to Japanese-style restaurants and hotels. The local wholesalers have played an important role for the sale of the porcelain by means of visiting and negotiating with the owners of restaurants and hotels distributed in all over Japan²³⁾. That innovative activity was initiated by a young wholesaler²⁴⁾, who was elected as a leader of the division of younger businessmen of the Cooperative Association of the Arita-yaki Wholesalers’ Estate in 2005. He got an idea to make goods for final consumer in order to vitalize a cup and bowl festival held in autumn yearly at the wholesalers’ estate in Arita. He mobilized the division of younger businessmen of the cooperative association and several younger businessmen among 22 wholesalers actively participated in the development project of a cup for Japanese spirits or “*shochu*”. The leader of the division invited five younger potters for the project. Even if there appeared different opinions in the development project, the leader kept the right to make a decision.

Sales amounted to ca. 842 million yen by May 2010, so that it is very successful. They have continued to develop some tableware for final consumers every year, and begun to sale it on the occasion of the autumn festival. Among the tableware developed by now, beer cups of porcelain in 2007 and dishes for curry in 2008 are successful: sales of the former amounted to ca. 463 mill. Yen and the latter to ca. 277 million yen by May 2010 (Tab.1). The wholesalers keep initiative to develop

Tab.1 Total Shipments value of ceramic tableware produced at old Arita-cho in the framework of “*Takumi no kura*” between the first year of the development and May 2010.

Kind of goods	Year of development	amount of shipments value, Yen
Cups for Japanese spirits	2005	842,636,008
Cups and table bottles for Japanese rice wine	2006	126,779,752
Cups for beer	2007	463,850,204
Dishes for curry	2008	277,578,244
Bowls for stew	2009	46,856,672

Source: Information gotten from the Cooperative Association of the *Arita-yaki* Wholesalers’ Estate

23) I got this information of the activities of wholesalers for *Arita-yaki* from my interviews with the chairman of board of directors of the Cooperative Association of the *Arita-yaki* Wholesalers’ Estate in September, 2008.

24) The present author had an interview with him in June 2010.

new porcelain goods. The members of the project are same on the side of the wholesalers, but change on the side of potters year by year.

4.4 Tourism promotion and its reality

Another place in the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain has begun to pursue its own landscape strategy. The Cooperative Association of Potteries in Mikawachi abandoned its business to collect bills and cash drafts in 2009, and launched a strategy to get more tourists, employing a former director of a coach corporation as its new secretary general. He has had a lot of experience of tourism business in the tourist coach business. The potteries in Mikawachi try to revive its traditional skill developed in the *Edo* era during the 18th and 19th century and the name of *Mikawachi-yaki* or *Mikawachi* porcelain, and to adapt the traditional skill for taste of people nowadays in order to attract tourists by means of improvement of the landscape at Mikawachi²⁵⁾.

The Cooperative Association of Potteries at Hasami, especially in Nakao, a village on a ravine with steep slopes, holds its own festival market on the first Saturday and Sunday in April yearly. More than ten thousand tourists visit this festival market and only nine potteries in Nakao can sell visitors about 30,000 thousand yen as a whole only for two days. The tourists enjoy the typical landscape of pottery at Nakao.

On the other hand, both old *Arita-cho* and new *Arita-cho* is too large to adopt a landscape strategy similar to that in *Okawachi* in *Imari*, *Mikawachi* in *Sasebo* and *Nakao* in *Hasami*. While a small number of potteries concentrate in a narrow ravine in these three places, a large number of potteries in *Arita* are scattered in a whole area of old *Arita-cho*. Although there were potteries, wholesalers and retailers of porcelain along the main street of old *Arita-cho*, most of the important enterprises relocated their main establishments either in the open valley of *Arita-cho* or on the developed tableland far away from the main street.

Twenty wholesalers were relocated in 1975 to an artificially developed tableland far from that main street not only to get larger warehouse and convenient location for transport of goods, but also to open a shopping mall specialized in porcelain (Editing Committee of the History of *Arita-cho*, 1988, p.598). In 1993, Porcelain Park was opened on another artificially developed tableland in mountains of *Arita-cho* with the astonishing architecture imitating the castle *Zwinger* in *Dresden* (*Asahi Shinbun*, 21.4.1993). This theme park was not so successful that it was sold to another enterprise in 2000 (*Asahi Shinbun*, 1.12.2000) and again in 2003 to an enterprise of Japanese rice wine and spirits²⁶⁾. In 1996, an exposition named *Honoo* (Flame) was held between July and October on an artificially developed tableland on the border between old *Arita-cho* and *Nishi-Arita-cho*. This exposition was organized by the prefectural government and there was also a pavilion

25) I had an interview with chairman of the board of directors of the Cooperative Association of Potteries at Mikawachi in November, 2009.

26) I have not found an article reporting the second change of owner of the theme park yet. But we can find nowadays owner of the park in the homepage of the Porcelain Park in *Arita*. In this homepage, it is written that the rice wine company began its business of Porcelain Park in 2003. See the following: http://www.nonnoko.com/info_facilities.html
The access date is 20th March 2010.

presenting the skill of porcelain manufacturing. While the prefectural government hoped and expected 1,200 thousand people would visit, it gathered more than two million. But it is doubtful if this exposition really brought positive effects on the porcelain manufacturing industry in Arita and its landscape, because I have not heard any news of the memorial hall of the *Honoo* Exposition, where a concert, for example, can be held. Thus large facilities and establishments related with porcelain manufacturing including museums have become to be scattered in the whole area of new Arita-cho, although there are still now retailers and some workshops along the traditional main street of old Arita-cho. It is impossible for tourists to visit these facilities and establishments on foot or by public transportation.

Furthermore, the spirit of solidarity in old Arita-cho has become weak and partly destroyed in the 2000s. There was Cooperative Association for Promoting Great *Arita-yaki*. This association has not functioned since 2008, and almost closed out because of liquidation which is to be ascribed to management failure. Antagonism dominates among the more traditional cooperative associations which were members of the Cooperative Association of Promoting Great *Arita-yaki* and among political leaders in new Arita-cho, who have power in the potteries and wholesalers. There was tourist promotion association in old Arita-cho, whose secretariat had been allocated to the house of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Arita. But this association was closed in 2007 because of the conflict between the mayor and the president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Arita²⁷⁾. And the secretariat of the Cooperative Association of Promotion of Great *Arita-yaki* functioned as a real promoter for tourism in new Arita-cho since before 2007.

As mentioned above, Cooperative Association of Promotion of Great *Arita-yaki* has been dissolved in fact in March 2008 (*Nishi-Nihon Shinbun*, 8. 4. 1998). Therefore, there was no office and promoter for the tourism in new Arita-cho between 2008 and summer of 2009, when the Center for Tourism and Information in Arita was established. This center should act not only for old Arita-cho, but also for new Arita-cho. The concept of tourism promotion of the Center for Tourism and Information in Arita has been changed to the concept of *machi-zukuri*²⁸⁾ to promote hospitality through harmonization of food and porcelain. While old Arita-cho represents porcelain, food symbolizes Nishi-Arita-cho in that concept. It is, however, not clear what *machi-zukuri* concretely means in this case. Does it mean only physical aspects of town planning or represent rather social and economic relationship among economic actors, or among local people?

Landscape strategy does not, however, mean only to keep up the landscape in order to promote inward tourism. In order to do so, people in the place or community should discuss in solidarity spirit and cooperate with each other. We can find this practice, for example, in Okawachi. It was and is possible to do so there, because it is a small village consisting of a small number of potteries. All the potteries at Okawachi have their

27) I got this information from the former managing director of the Cooperative Association of Promotion of Great *Arita-yaki* in February 2010.

28) The term “*machi-zukuri*” is popular among Japanese people who are interested in the promotion of town and city. It means both town planning and creating a community.

own younger successors.

5. Conclusion

Like as many industrial districts in Japan, the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain has been in crisis since the beginning of the 1990s and some indicators such as numbers of potteries and turnover show that this district has shrunk more and more. However, it could demonstrate its survivability better than the most important industrial districts of ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments, namely Gifu and Aichi. It is attributable partly to the innovative activities by the local people, who have found some new markets.

The industrial district of *Arita* porcelain is comprised not only of old *Arita-cho* in Saga prefecture, but it also includes Okawachi in Imari, Saga prefecture, Hasami and Mikawachi in Nagasaki prefecture and some other localities. As *Arita* porcelain was sold more and more from the 1960s through the beginning of the 1990s, and almost all the ceramic tableware and pottery ornaments have been sold in the brand name of *Arita* porcelain in this period, and complex vertical social division of labor has been organized among local potteries and local wholesalers.

However, innovative activities have been carried out especially by local potteries at Hasami as well as at Okawachi within the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain. Both those localities have so long tradition as old *Arita-cho* and had kept their own brand name different from *Arita* before the 1950s. It is common for Hasami and Okawachi to develop a new channel directly to final consumers, and to grasp the taste of final consumers. As a result, small wholesalers in old *Arita-cho* have lost their power gradually. The place identity has been recovered at Hasami and Okawachi respectively and new brand name has been redeveloped at both the localities.

On the other hand, we can recognize innovative activities at old *Arita-cho* as well. In this town, an entrepreneur who moved from a metropolitan area into this town created new ideas for very high grade and fine porcelain and he created new relationships between local potteries and corporations located in the Tokyo metropolitan area in order to produce the new luxury goods. On the other hand, younger wholesalers at old *Arita-cho* have been also successful for producing new tableware for final consumers. This is unconventional for traditional *Arita* porcelain, because local wholesalers sold *Arita* porcelain not to final consumers, but mainly to Japanese restaurant and hotels before.

It is important to recognize that innovations can be realized not by one man, but through group actions. This was exemplified by cases at Hasami, Okawachi and old *Arita-cho*. Not only intra-district social relationships, but also establishment of channel to the world outside the district is also very important for innovative activities.

It is remarkable that innovative activities in each place have led to fragmentation of small localities or places within the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain. This district has continued to shrink since the

beginning of the 1990s. However, corporations and small local places which can establish or reestablish their own brand name are going to survive. That means, the industrial district of *Arita* porcelain does not disappear, but some new local brands have revived in formerly independent locality. We should notice that this fragmentation may be ascribed partly to the landscape strategy, but mainly to changing relationship between potteries, wholesalers, retailers and final consumers. Japanese porcelain manufacturing industry have shrunk through the change of life style of Japanese people as well as through loss of a part of Japanese market because of import of cheap ceramic tableware from East and Southeast Asian countries. But it may well survive by means of innovative activities by local people.

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