

# Bringing people together through “Glocal” production to build the future

## Tokunaga Porcelain Co., Ltd.

### ◆ Since Our Founding to Now

**Producing that makes people happy, producing with pride,  
producing that connects with society**



Celebrating our 154 years of business this year, Kouraku.kiln aims to create products that are close to people's lives, based on its management principles of "manufacturing that makes people happy," "manufacturing with pride," and "manufacturing that connects with society," and is working to develop new products that deliver smiles by researching cutting-edge technologies, building networks with local companies of high-quality ceramics that meet the needs of each age and returning profits to local communities.

Takanobu Tokunaga was appointed as the fifth successive president in January 2011. The Great East Japan Earthquake and other events that occurred two months after his appointment resulted in a temporary slump in business, and he became aware of more than the value of porcelain, but also the value of environment for employees and their sense of pride and satisfaction in their work.

### ◆ Initiatives for Employees

#### **Linking traditional industries to the next generation**

Currently, the company employs 18 people (more than half of them are women), most of whom come from the local neighborhood. The company is making the most of diversity in its management employing two foreigners to provide services in multiple languages as well as direct employment of persons with disabilities as well as ordering some products to B-type facilities. For employees who wish to learn about porcelain, various attempts are made to open up facilities and equipment and to connect traditional industries to the next generation. Since 2013, the company has been providing an “artist-in-residence program” that allows artists in a variety of fields to participate in porcelain production in order to young people from both Japan and overseas. It also has guest houses in place. Tokunaga, who also majored in pottery at the University of Fine Arts, says, "It is challenging to make a connection between education and industry. To this end, artist-in-residence is probably one way of doing this, and it is also an opportunity for us to spread the popularity of Arita porcelain to the world."

### ◆ Initiatives for the Environment

#### **Waste Reduction through porcelain treasure hunting**



The company has been making efforts to consider the environment since its founding. After the war, the company developed pine forests and relocated the plant to the present location. The factory building was relocated to a former elementary school, and harvested pine lumber was used as fuel. Currently, solar panels are installed on the roof of the plant. In 1991, Tokunaga, the fourth president, introduced lead-free paints (developed by the Saga Ceramic Research Center) and hazardous substances (cadmium, lead, etc.) for the first time in Japan in the ceramic manufacturing process.

Amid a variety of environmental activities, Tokunaga Porcelain's unique activity was to reignite “surplus stock treasure hunting,” an initiative that once again shines a light on surplus inventory. It was triggered by a remark made by a Brazilian-born employee who is currently working as a residence coordinator after seeing the pottery inventory in the corner of the factory, “Why not sell this? These white ceramics are treasures.” Treasure hunting participants can purchase a basket of a selection of ceramics starting at 5,000 yen from the inventory of ceramics scattered over the wide site of the Kouraku.kiln. There are many visitors not only from Japan but also from overseas. This initiative not only contributes to the reduction of waste, but also leads to the discovery of new charms of ceramics and cultural exchanges.

### ◆ Initiatives for the Region and Community

#### **Utilizing networks to mobilize Arita's creativity**

Arita, which has been producing porcelain under the division of specialization since the Edo period, has specialist craftspeople in each process in which porcelain can be made. Taking advantage of its network as a kiln manufacturer, Kouraku.kiln has made use of their network as a kiln source, and has been responding flexibly to various requests, not only by arranging their own craftsmen but also by collaborating with their partner companies, to meet the needs of each client.

It is the first company in Saga Prefecture to participate in the "Kuruma-Haku", a model project for the sharing economy-type tourist service in Kyushu, which is a plan where users tour the region by camping cars. The company has installed a unique parking lot and electric facilities on the grounds of the Kouraku.kiln. They are also actively involved in such efforts for regional revitalization and community development.

### ◆ Future developments

#### **Into the future**

Tokunaga says, "Although management is difficult, traditional industries must be passed on. I want to recruit people who want to protect the industry. I think Arita will become even stronger if we are able to respond to the needs of the region, all kinds of areas."

With regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he said, "I thought that everything we had done was going to be all right, and I was completely gutted. I was shocked that we finally had the tools to tell you what everyone what we had done," he said, adding that he would continue his efforts to build a future for the next generation.