

Methods for Revitalization of a Region through Landscape Improvement Using Traditional Local Products

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ABSTRACT

I have analyzed four methods for revitalizing the Ibi district, a local community in Minami Awaji City in Hyogo Prefecture, using Awaji tile, a traditional product. The first analysis is of a workshop to think about the revitalization of the community using Awaji tile. The second is an evaluation of using Awaji tile in the construction of green spaces and the renewal of existing buildings. The third analysis is on the distribution of terracotta for plants to all the residents of this district and the construction of art objects using Awaji tile at the seashore and by the entrance area of a highway interchange. The fourth analysis is of the results of information sharing by a newsletter and a website. Finally, I gave questionnaires to workshop participants. As a result, visible, completed products of these efforts were evaluated positively, but more effort is required related to the newsletter and website. Overall, I could verify the compounded possibilities for revitalization of the community using Awaji tile as promoting regional industry, activating the community, and improving the landscape.

Key Words : Revitalization, Region, Landscape Formation, Awaji Tile, Traditional Industry

I. Background and Purpose

Minami Awaji City is a town with bountiful nature and beautiful landscapes in the south of Awaji Island, which is the southernmost part of Hyogo Prefecture. The local 'Awaji tile' produced here is the best in Japan. The Ibi district, the focus of this thesis, is located in southern Minami Awaji City and has a beach and a fisherman's wharf. The production of Awaji tile has decreased since the Hanshin Awaji Earthquake in 1995 because of its heaviness, delays in new production development, and lack of improvement in price. In this research, I have analyzed the effects of landscape improvement projects using Awaji tile that we undertook on revitalizing the tile industry, the local area and tourism. Earlier research on this topic includes Matsui(2004)¹⁾ and Ito(2006)²⁾, but there are no previous comprehensive investigations that include results ranging from workshops to follow-up questionnaires.

II. Methods

The methods used are as follows.

1. Workshop

We held a workshop to think about the revitalization of the area using Awaji Tile on January 19, 2007. Thirty-two people, including residents and members of the Minami Awaji Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Awaji Tile Association, the Alpha Green Network NPO, and the Community Design Section of Hyogo Prefecture, participated in this workshop and discussed the issues actively while doing group work.

2. The Creation of Art Objects and Improvement of the Landscape

We sought to improve the landscape of the area and promote tourism using Awaji tile. To choose the construction sites we investigated the area with core workshop members and chose two places as candidates: the entrance to the Minami Awaji Interchange, and Ibi beach.

3. Distribution of Awaji tile Planters

We designed two types of Awaji tile planters-black and gray Ibushi tile and Yohen tile, which is baked by special method-and distributed them to every house in Ibi.

4. Improvement of the Landscape

To improve the landscape, we made a green space using Awaji tile in front of the Ibi Area Community Center. We also used tile to improve the appearance of a garbage collection station.

5. Information Sharing

We also tried to share information using a newsletter and a website.

6. Opinions of the Participants

I compiled opinions from the participants about the workshops and information sharing.

III. Results and Discussion

1. Workshop Results

Table 1 shows the rough program of the day. The results



Figure 1. Greetings by Mr. Nobori



Figure 2. Participants listening to a presentation

Table 1. The program of the workshop

13:00~	1. Begin explanation of the workshop(Figure 1 shows the organizer greeting the participants)
13:05~	2. Explain process of the project
13:15~	3. About the town of Ibi and the landscape of Awaji Island(Figure 2 shows participants)
13:35~	4. Group work: 'Let's think about the use of Awaji tile'(Figs. 3 and 4 show presentations)
▼ Self-introductions	
▼ Everyone writes about the three things below on post-its.	
	• I hope Ibi district to be...
	• Community design using tile. Tile application ideas.
	• Favorite plants for tile planters
▼ Discussion of the opinions of each group and organization of themes using the KJ method(Figure4 shows the voting of the participants.)	
14:40~	5. Presentation
15:00~	6. Vote! What do you like best as a method to activate?
15:15~	7. Results and future plans
15:30	End

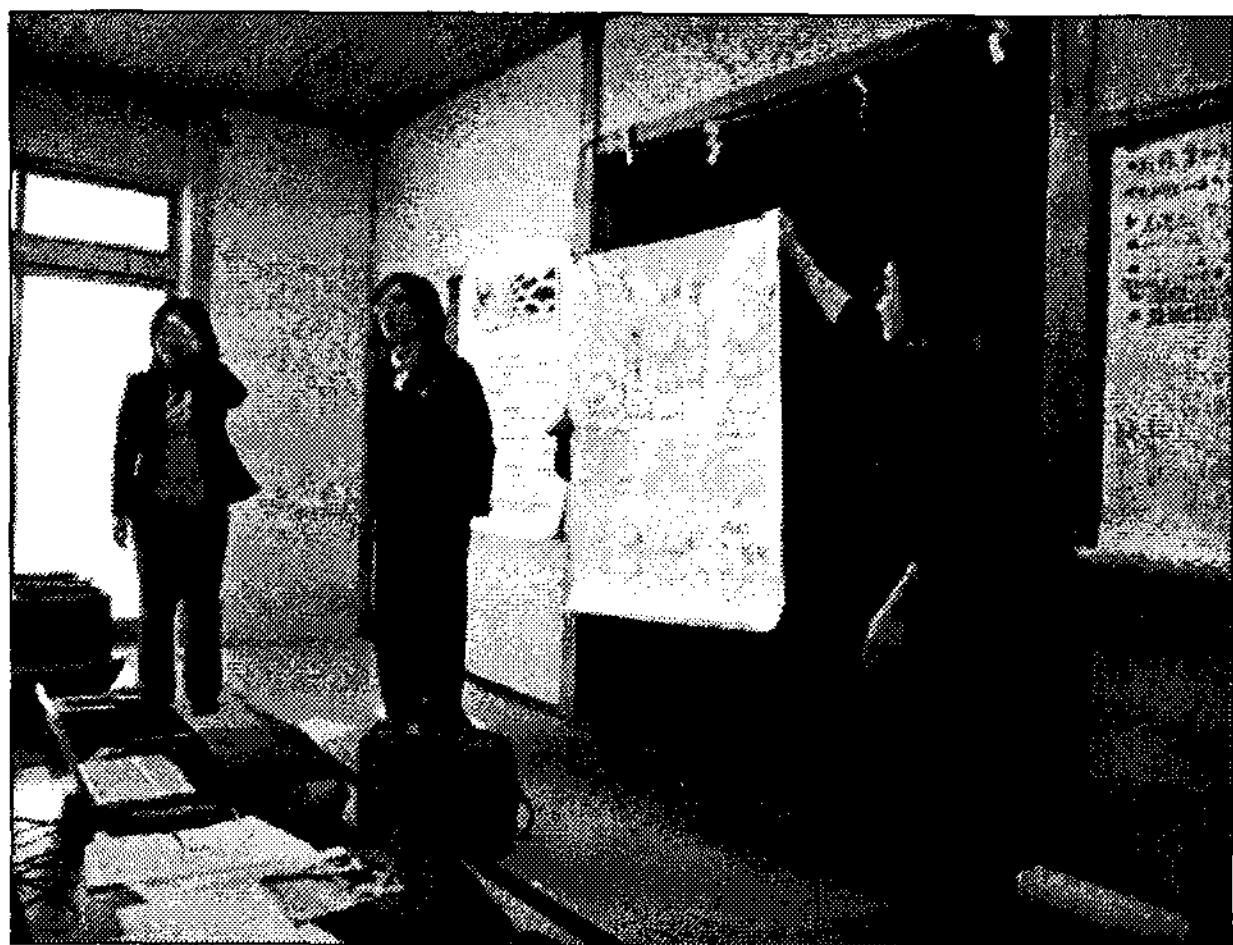


Figure 3. Group presentation



Figure 4. Voting on their ideas

of the workshop are as follows.

- Keywords in response to the query 'this town is expected to be...' were 'tourism' and 'fishing.'
- Suggestions for the use of tiles included with flowers in front of houses and around buildings, as well as to beautify a garbage station.

2. Creation of Art Objects

1) In front of Awaji Island Minami Interchange

The first plan proposal was a simple design using end tiles stacked with their insignia facing forward. The second plan, a design with three types of tiles in a changing pattern, was selected(Figure 5, 6).

2) Ibi Beach

Multiple designs were considered for an art object in front

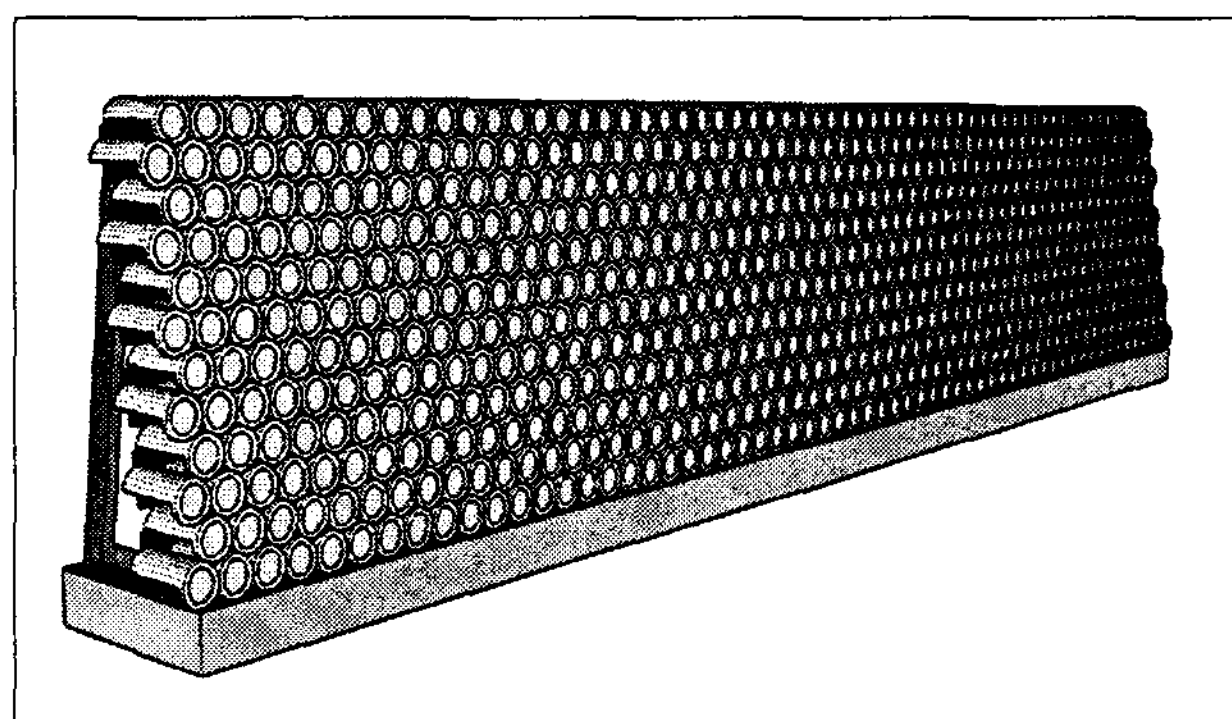


Figure 5. Proposed interchange entrance art object

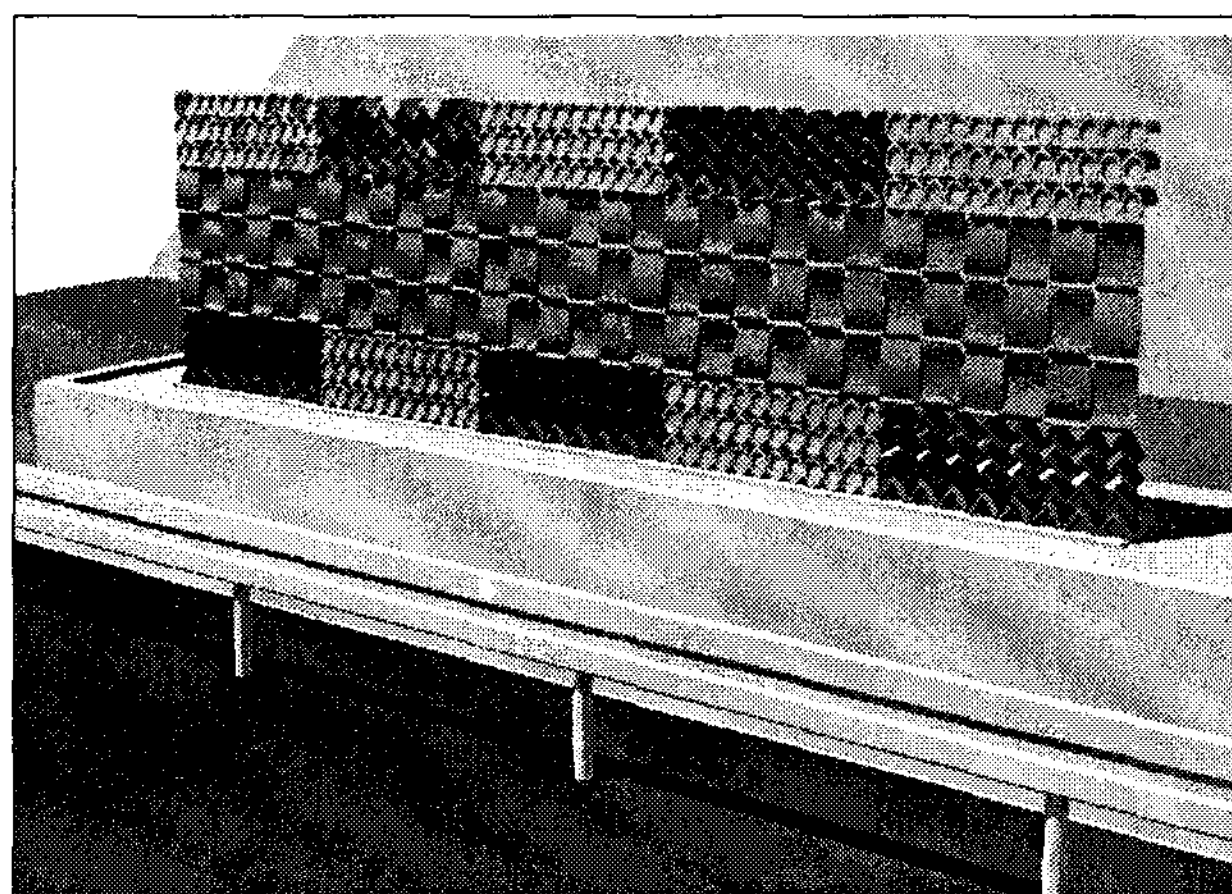


Figure 6. Final interchange entrance art object design

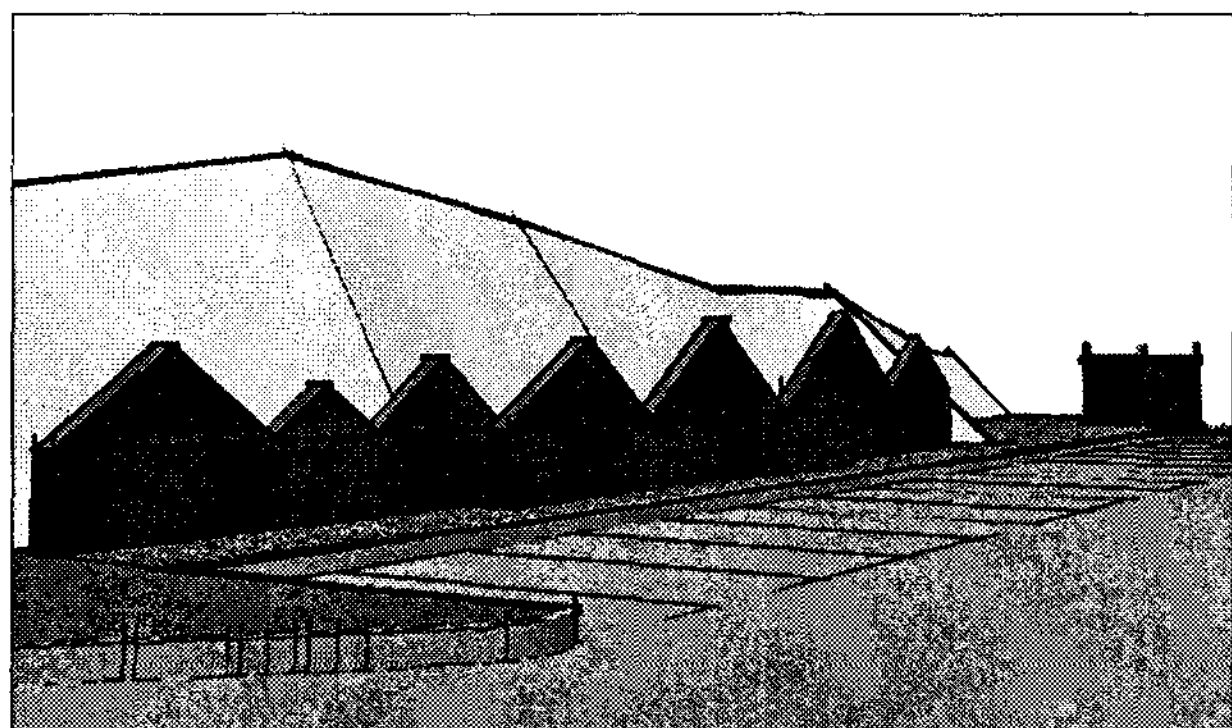


Figure 7. Proposed art object(1)

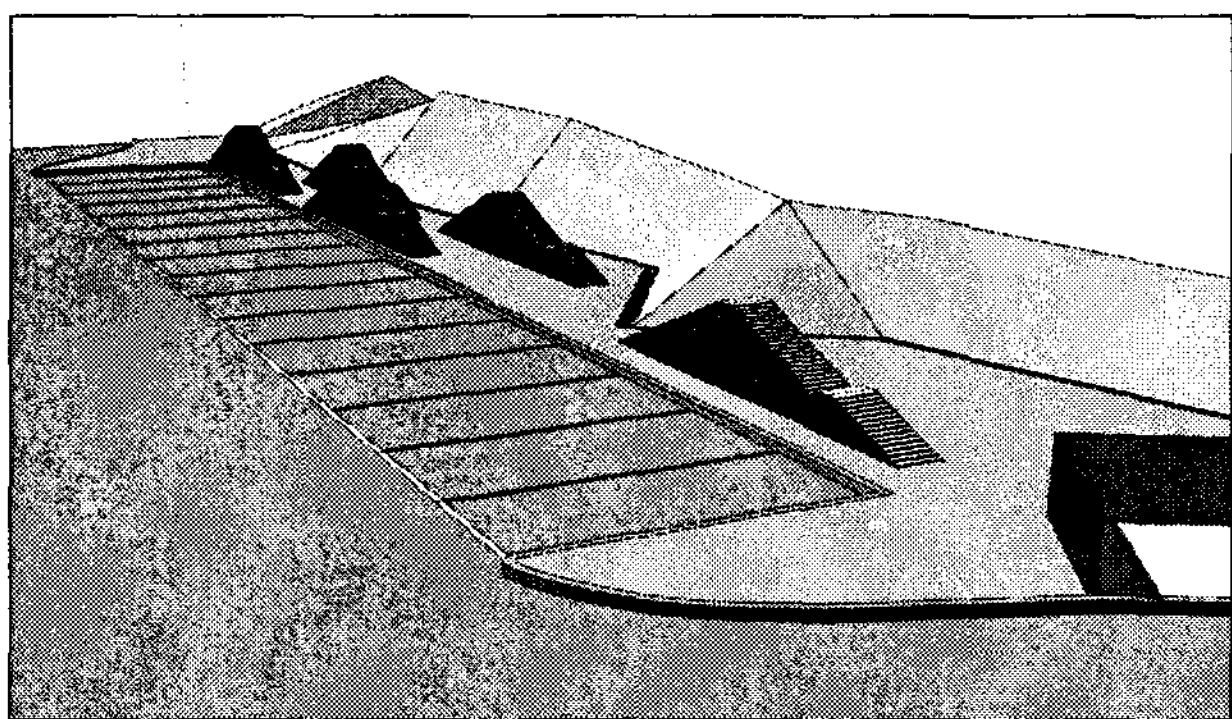


Figure 8. Proposed art object(2)

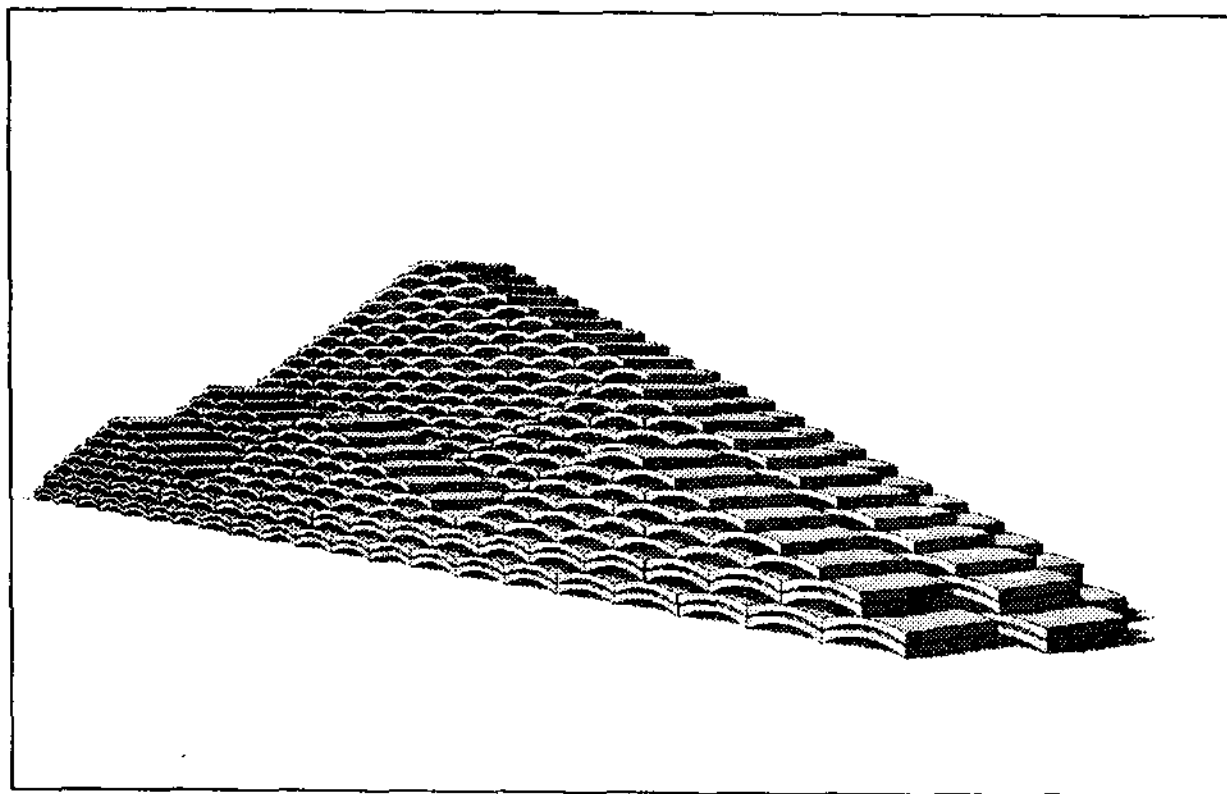


Figure 9. Final form

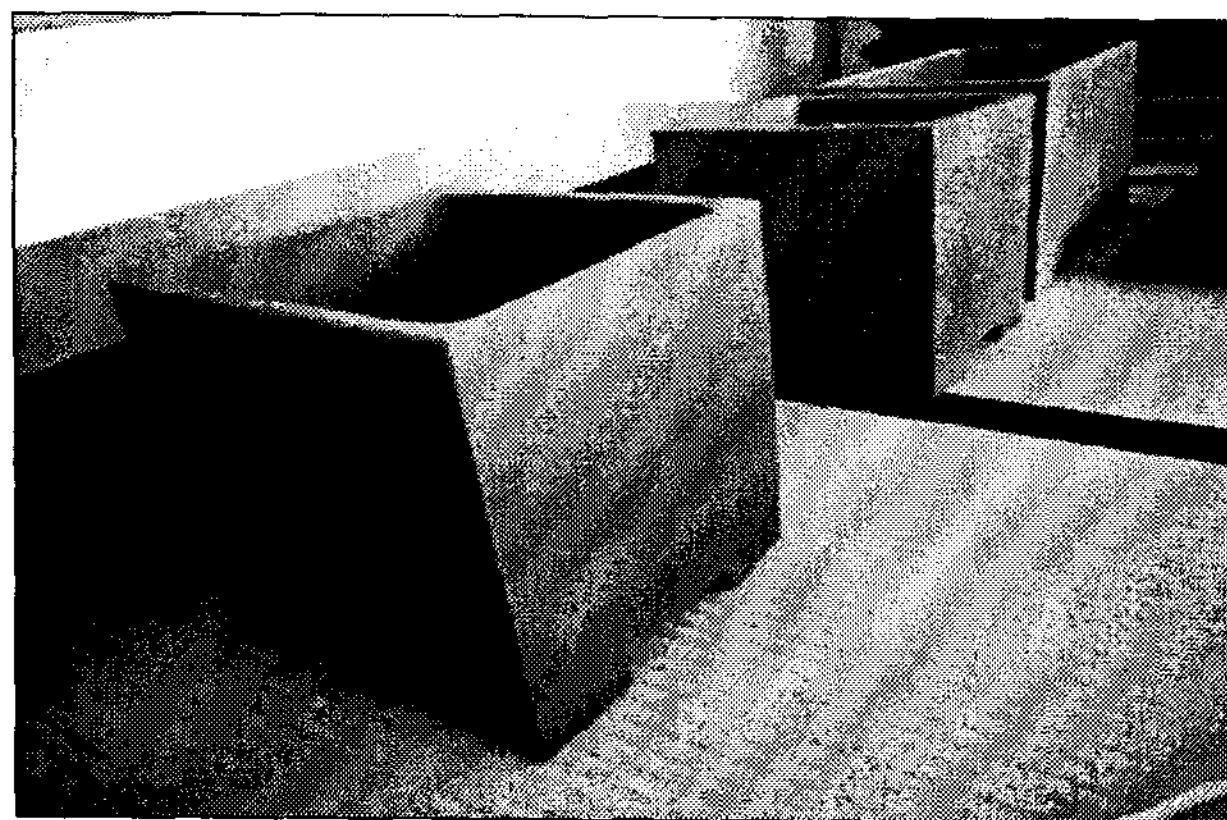


Figure 10. Distributed planter



Figure 11 Completed art object at interchange

of Ibi Beach (Figure 7~9). Finally, there was also the issue of how to pile the tiles, so multiple additional design proposals were made. Photographs of the completed works are shown in Figure 11, 12.

3. Distribution of Tile Planters

We distributed planters made with tile materials in coo-

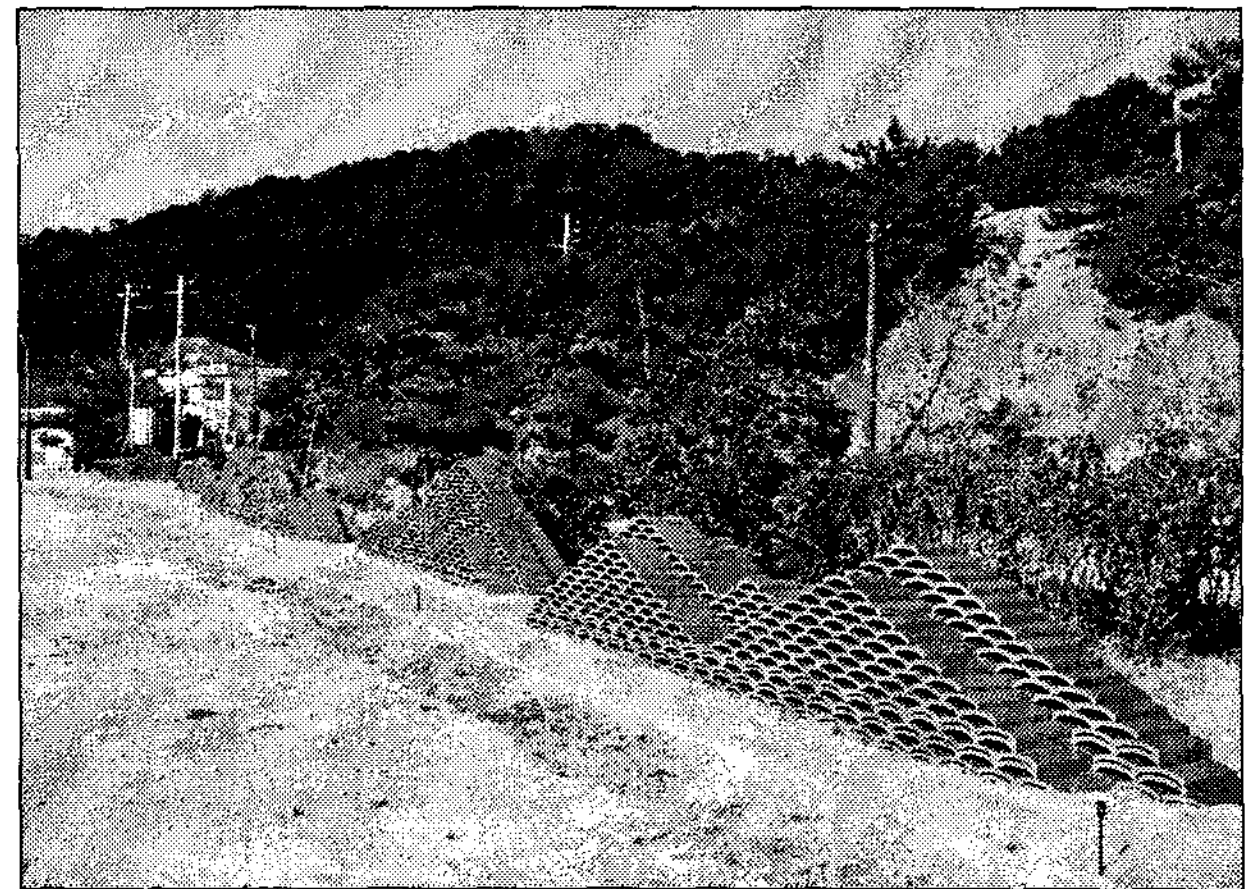


Figure 12. Completed beach art object

peration with local tile businesses to each home in the Ibi district. We created four types of original planters using two sizes and two colors—those with the color of silver Ibushi tiles and those with a brown, earthy appearance that results from the unique Yohen firing method (Figure 10). We distributed 50 of the planters and recommended planting a type of narcissus, a native member of the amaryllis family that was frequently mentioned in the workshop.

4. Landscape

We proposed the use of Ibushi tiles in the planting of vegetation in front of the Ibi District Community Plaza, a local meeting facility. In addition, we also refurbished a nearby garbage collection station with tiles, contributing to unified elements in the surrounding scenery. These were completed with the cooperation of an elderly association and other local people (Figure 13, 14).

5. Information Sharing



Figure 13. Planting at the Ibi District Community Plaza

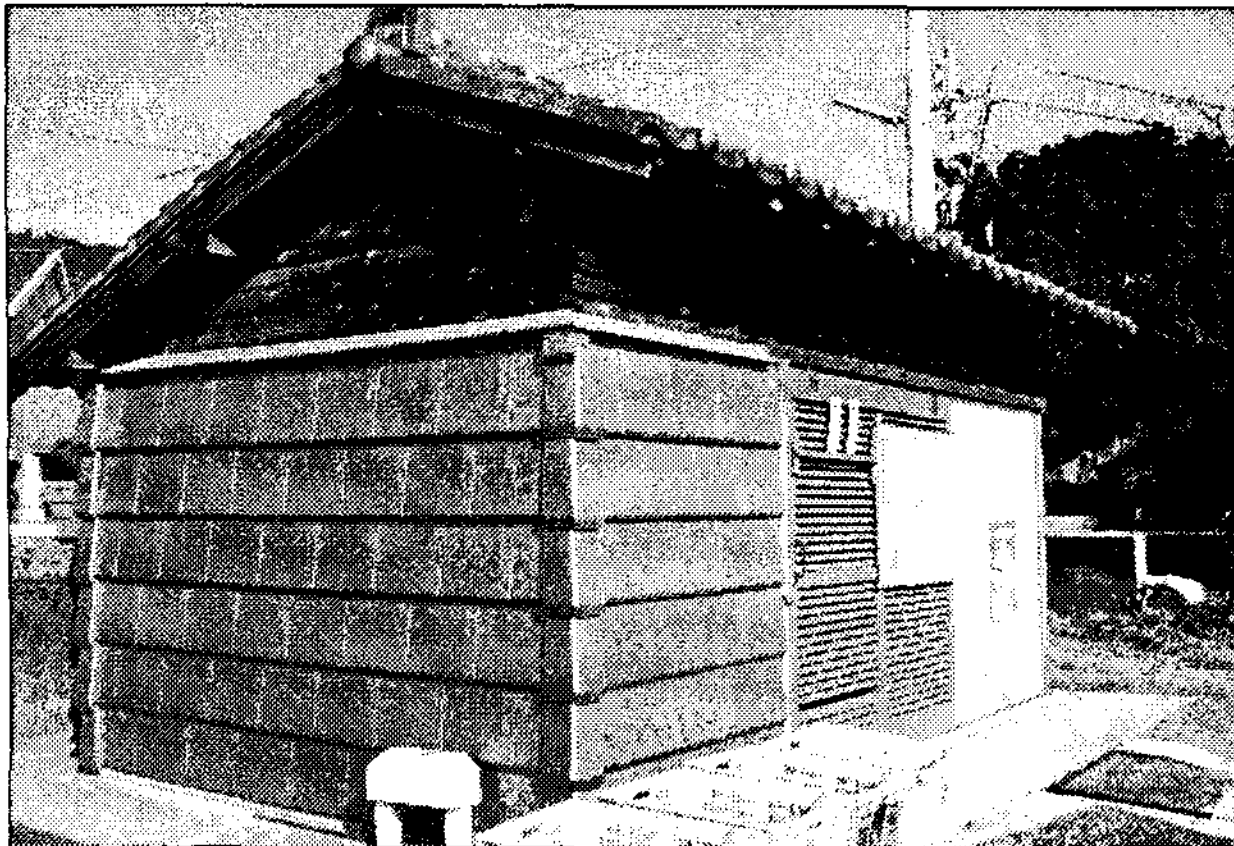


Figure 14. Refurbished garbage collection station

1) Initiation of a Newsletter and a Blog

We created a newsletter to report our activities in the Ibi district to local residents. The contents included an overview of activities, the tile art objects, the decorative use of tiles in the flowerbeds at the Ibi District Community Plaza and the garbage collection station, tile planters, workshop ideas about using tiles in community design, and the new Ibi Internet blog. Figure 15 shows the front and back pages.

We also started an Internet blog(web log) called the Ibi Tile Project: Ibi + Tiles + Town(Figure 16). By using an Internet blog, we sought to provide information to relatively younger people who use the Internet and people from outside the city and the prefecture.

6. Opinions of the Participants

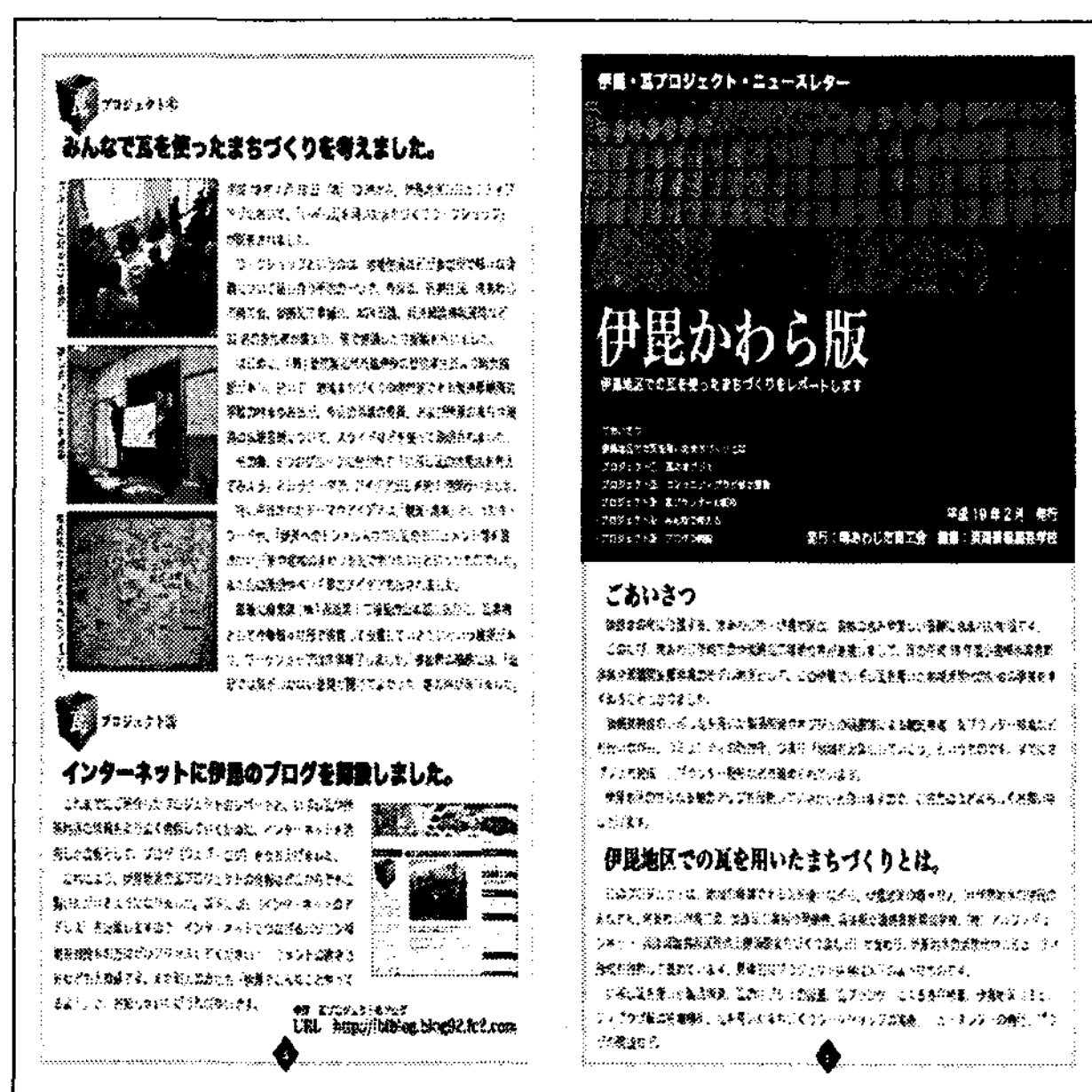


Figure 15. Newsletter pages 1 and 4(cover)



Figure 16. Blog

Thirty-three people participated in this workshop. Their ages ranged from 40s to 70s with most participants being in their 50s and 60s. The proportions of men and women were almost equal. Their evaluations of the results, which we gathered through interviews and by writing, were as follows.

1. Many people evaluated the workshop as good, and some people wished to continue this type of workshop.
2. Most of the opinions were positive about the art projects that contributed to landscape formation.
3. As for the information sharing, many people read the newsletter, but few people had seen the blog on the Internet. In a fishing village with numerous elderly people such as Ibi, it is an issue that such information media is not yet popular.

IV. Conclusion

These projects were implemented with numerous participants by taking proposals, opinions, hopes and other ideas from the perspectives of the participants, art objects and planting were planned and implemented in front of the Minami Awaji Interchange, at the Ibi Beach and elsewhere. I think that we can also positively evaluate the planting of a green space and the refurbishment of a garbage collection station using tiles, the design and distribution of planters to every house, flower planting and numerous other results were achieved in a short

period of time. The opinions of the participants also show that the workshop was generally evaluated highly. I also believe that the creation of the art objects resulted from the exchange of opinions and the development of consensus and understanding. However, in contrast to 100% newsletter approval, only a small number had seen the Internet blog.

As a participatory community design method, workshop activities are very effective. In the future, even without the intervention of experts, it is important to sustain opportunities for this type of flat exchange of opinions, and to have organizations for the management of green spaces.

The installed art objects could become damaged, so continuous maintenance is necessary. This should not just be left to organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Tile Association, but should be lead by local residents. For this reason, it is desirable to have a system that allows consensus-building in management at all times and allows ideas to be put into practice. At the same time, I believe that these efforts should not just be left to local residents, but that government, industry, and experts should join in activities that further

enhance local vitality.

Note of Appreciation

I am grateful to the people of the Ibi district who participated in these projects. I would also like to extend many thanks to Mr. Jun Takigawa who helped with the drawing work and the staff of the Minami Awaji Chamber of Commerce.

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