

## Toward the “Treasures of Okinawan Dyeing and Weaving: The Yaeyama Collection of Yosho Tobaru” Exhibition

Thank you very much for visiting “Treasures of Okinawan Dyeing and Weaving: The Yaeyama Collection of Yosho Tobaru”. In July of this year, Ms. Sachiko Arakaki was recognized as a Living National Treasure. This is a great honor for Ishigaki City, and on behalf of the citizens of Ishigaki, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations.

Five years ago, I had the opportunity to visit Mr. Yosho Tobaru's home in Tokyo with the Director of Education and others to see his collection that he has collected over the years, mainly works of Mr. Yuko Tamanaha, Ms. Sachiko Arakaki, Mr. Yoshitaro Kamakura, and other dyeing and weaving artists who have close ties with the Yaeyama area. We were all deeply impressed and eagerly awaited to hold an exhibition in Ishigaki City so that many people could see the collection.

Last year, the exhibition “Treasures of Okinawan Dyeing and Weaving: The Yosho Tobaru Collection” held by the Okinawa Churashima Foundation at the Okinawa Prefectural Museum & Art Museum attracted more than 7,000 visitors.

We would like to thank the Okinawa Churashima Foundation for their full support and co-sponsorship to realize the Yaeyama exhibition.

This year's exhibition will feature 114 works, up from 87 last year. Seven Living National Treasures, Mr. Yoshitaro Kamakura, the first honorary citizen of Ishigaki City, Mr. Yuko Tamanaha, also an honorary citizen of Ishigaki City, Ms. Hatsuko Miyahira, a Shuri weaver, Ms. Sada Yonamine, a Yomitan *hanaori* weaver, Ms. Toshiko Taira, a *bashofu* weaver, Ms. Kyoko Shukumine, a Shuri weaver, who was certified as a Living National Treasure last year, and Ms. Sachiko Arakaki, a Yaeyama *jofu* weaver, as well as two *bingata* artists Eiki Shiroma and Reiko Fujimura, who were designated prefectural intangible cultural assets. This is the first time in Okinawa Prefecture that the works of these nine artists, will be exhibited together in one place.

Mr. Tobaru will donate his vast collection of 119 pieces, collected over 21 years, to Ishigaki City when the new Ishigaki City Yaeyama Museum & Art Museum (tentative name) is completed, and he hopes that these works will be preserved and utilized as Okinawan treasures without being scattered forever. He hopes that the new museum will become a treasure house of contemporary Okinawan dyeing and weaving, and that the collection will continue to be preserved and utilized. Currently, Ishigaki City has newly established a “Museum Construction Preparation Office” and is working hard to realize the plan as soon as possible.

As you know, Mr. Yosho Tobaru established a scholarship fund for university entrance 10 years ago and a new scholarship fund for high school entrance last April for the development of the youth of Yaeyama. In addition, he has donated many books to elementary, junior high,

and high schools in Yaeyama every year, contributing greatly to the development of human resources in Yaeyama, and we are very grateful for his contribution.

We sincerely hope that this exhibition, realized through the efforts of Mr. Yosho Tobaru, will reaffirm the textiles of the Yaeyama region and give birth to many new dyeing and weaving artists. We hope that visitors to the exhibition will enjoy the charm of the exhibited works to the fullest.

In conclusion, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to Mr. Tobaru for his support and cooperation in holding this exhibition, and we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Okinawa Churashima Foundation and all those who have supported and cooperated with us in this endeavor.

October 2, 2024

Yoshitaka Nakayama, Mayor of Ishigaki City