

### Shimizudani Refinery Site

Now little more than stone and concrete foundations on a hillside, the site of the Shimizudani Refinery tells the story of a bold but failed attempt to restart silver production here in the late nineteenth century. In 1886, when the Osaka-based Fujita-gumi corporation acquired rights to Iwami Ginzan, the mine had already been dormant for decades. Fujita-gumi invested heavily, introducing cutting-edge mining equipment and methods, including using dynamite to expand existing shafts and extract large amounts of ore. These modernization efforts culminated in the 1895 opening of a new refinery employing the latest technology to process the vast volume of ore Fujita-gumi mined in shafts nearby.

After more than 350 years of mining, the silver deposits at Iwami Ginzan were already depleted, however, meaning that the quality of the ore was lower than expected. The technology used to extract the silver, moreover, did not meet expectations. The Shimizudani Refinery operated for only a year and a half before closing. Fujita-gumi sought to cut its losses by transferring the refining equipment to other mines under its control, including those at Jiufen in Taiwan, which was a Japanese colony at the time. The foundations that remain today only hint at the facility's once impressive scale.