

Izumiyama Quarry

According to local tradition, the Izumiyama quarry was discovered in the first decades of the 1600s by a Korean potter whose name is recorded as Kanagae Sambe'e (d. 1655). Sambe'e discovered pottery stone (*jiseki*; lit., "porcelain stone"). Pottery stone contains kaolinite, a white alumina-silicate clay mineral that is an essential component of porcelain. The pottery stone at Izumiyama is made up of kaolinite, sericite, feldspar, quartz, and a small amount of iron oxides that give the surface of stones a yellowish color. The quarry represented a major resource for the Nabeshima family, rulers of Saga domain, because it made the large-scale production of porcelain possible in Japan for the first time. They tightly guarded the quarry with checkpoints blocking the ways in and out of the Uchiyama area—which was centered on Izumiyama—and no one was allowed to leave without permission from Saga domain.

No records exist of the original size of Mt. Izumiyama before it became a quarry. The mountain was gradually carved away until it took on the form it has today. For more than 200 years, the stone was quarried by hand. Only after the opening of Japan and the Meiji Restoration in 1868 did machinery begin to be used, and in 1897 around 10,024 tons of pottery stone were excavated from Izumiyama quarry. Inside the two remaining open pits at Izumiyama, marks made by excavation tools are still visible.

Izumiyama was designated a National Historic Site in 1980 and was actively used as a quarry until 1995. In the late 1800s, kilns in Arita began to buy higher quality pottery stone from Amakusa, Kumamoto Prefecture, and today most Arita ware is made with pottery stone from Amakusa.