

Izumiyama Quarry

According to tradition in Arita, the Izumiyama quarry was discovered in the first decades of the 1600s by a Korean potter named Kanagae Sambe'e (d. 1655). Sambe'e discovered pottery stone (*jiseki*; lit., "porcelain stone"), a type of stone that is high in silica, quartz, and kaolinite. Kaolinite is alumina-silicate clay mineral that is an essential component of porcelain. The pottery stone at Izumiyama also contains sericite, an aggregate of fine grains of mica, that help bond the powdered stone together as clay. The high quality and quantity of the Izumiyama pottery stone deposit made large-scale production of porcelain possible for the first time in Japan.

Mt. Izumiyama was designated a National Historic Site in 1980 and was actively used as a quarry until 1995. Inside the two remaining pits at Izumiyama, marks made by excavation tools are still visible. Even with the opening of Japan to foreign trade in the 1850s, work in the quarry was done by hand until the beginning of the 1900s and the adoption of western technology. Although there are many records that describe how the quarry was run, and how the workers lived at the time, there are few records that describe the actual process of quarrying the pottery stone. One of the few surviving resources is a large plate made sometime in the 1830s through the 1850s that depicts the traditional Arita ware production process, including pottery stone being quarried by hand. The original plate is housed at the Arita Ceramic Museum, while a large-scale reproduction is on display at Arita History and Folklore Museum along with tools used to extract the stone.