

## **Utara Coal Mine: Its Rise and Fall**

Demand for coal, a resource found throughout northwest Iriomote, increased in the late nineteenth century as Japan industrialized, and mining got underway on nearby Uchibanari Island in 1886, continuing despite the threat that malaria posed to the miners' health.

The Utara Mine opened on Iriomote in the 1930s as overseas expansion drove up the demand for natural resources. In part by keeping malaria at bay, Utara grew to become the largest mine of the Iriomote island cluster, employing almost 1,000 people at its height. The system was highly exploitative. Lured to jobs with false promises, miners were forced to work long hours, paid in coupons rather than money, and brutally punished if they ran away. During World War II, as maritime transport routes were blocked and workers were conscripted to fight, the mine ceased operations in 1943.

**[135/Target 100]**