

### Exhibit Room 3: What Happened to *Tatara* Ironmaking?

*Tatara* ironmaking was a major industry in the Chūgoku region (Hiroshima, Okayama, Shimane, Tottori, and Yamaguchi Prefectures) from the 1700s to the late 1800s. At one point, the region produced 80 percent of all the iron and steel made in Japan.

In the late nineteenth century, the arrival of Western reverberatory and blast furnaces created stiff competition in the smelting industry. Compared to *tatara* furnaces, the newer Western furnaces produced iron and steel more quickly and in greater quantities.

Engineers at *tatara* ironworks designed more efficient furnaces and developed new types of steel that could be produced using traditional methods and materials, and the port town of Yasugi became an important hub for this research and development. However, traditional *tatara* ironworks were ultimately unable to compete, and most of them closed in the 1920s. Today, the legacy of smelting lives on in Yasugi's modern-day steel industry.

The exhibits in this section describe the function of local ironworks in the iron and steelmaking industry, both before and after the advent of new technologies from the West.