

Suzuki & Co.'s Towering Industrial Chimneys: Landmarks That Preside Over the Setouchi Region to This Day

During World War I, Suzuki & Co. moved to greatly expand its non-ferrous metals business after taking on a contract to produce artillery shells. The company built massive industrial chimneys for the smelting of copper and zinc. In fact, two chimneys from the Suzuki & Co. era remain standing in the Setouchi region to this day. The towering chimneys have served as a landmark for ships passing through the Setouchi Islands since their construction over 100 years ago.

Taro Entotsu: The Industrial Chimney that Still Stands in Okayama Prefecture

The first of these industrial chimneys belonged to the Nippon Kinzoku Hibi Refinery located in Hibi, Okayama Prefecture. Suzuki & Co. purchased the refinery in 1903 and renamed the company Nippon Kinzoku Co., Ltd. in 1916. Suzuki & Co. rapidly expanded Nippon Kinzoku's business in order to grow its copper smelting capacity. Nippon Kinzoku now operates as Hibi Smelter, a member of the Mitsui Kinzoku Group.

The factory built by Suzuki & Co. at the time has since been torn down. However, the immense chimney affectionately nicknamed *Taro Entotsu* ("Taro chimney")—still stands to this day, despite being long out of use.



Nippon Kinzoku Hibi Refinery, Taisho Era
(1912-1926)



The refinery chimney that came to be known affectionately as *Taro Entotsu*, circa 1955



The chimney today (currently not in use)