

Sericulture in Gokayama

Sericulture, or silk farming, started before the sixteenth century and became a major industry in Gokayama after the Edo period (1603–1868). The large *gassho-zukuri* (steep thatched roof) houses of Gokayama were ideal for growing silkworms, thanks to their multi-level design and the light and good ventilation in the attic, where the silkworms were raised. The mulberries used as food for silkworms were grown nearby.

The raw silk produced in Gokayama was transported to the town of Johana, where silk fabrics were produced under the protection of the Kaga domain. Gokayama was unsuited to rice cultivation, so sericulture was one of the most important resources for paying land taxes. After World War II, economic development and the popularity of synthetic fabrics resulted in the decline of sericulture in the region.