

Rukei Goya

The Gokayama region within Nanto city is characterized by its dense forest and steep mountain terrain, which becomes heavily laden with snow in the winter. Since Gokayama is isolated and remote, it was an ideal spot to banish exiles. The area around the east bank of the Sho River was used as a site of exile by the Kaga domain during the Edo period (1603–1868).

Gokayama was home to a number of exile huts known as *rukei goya*. These tiny thatched-roofed huts featured the bare minimum of amenities, including a toilet and a slot through which food could be passed.

While no original huts remain, a replica was built in Gokayama in 1965 after the original eighteenth-century structure deteriorated due to snow. To ensure the isolation of the exiles, the huts were situated on the far side of the Sho River, across from the villages, as it was extremely difficult to access due to the lack of bridges. To transport items and people across the water, ropes and carriers had to be used. Starting in 1667, over a period of 200 years, approximately 150 prisoners were exiled here. Tourists today can visit the exile hut as well as peek through the food slot; a figure dressed as a samurai sits inside.