

Toyosaka Shrine

Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine was controlled by local warlords from its discovery in 1527 until the beginning of the seventeenth century. At one time the silver mine was ruled by the powerful Mohri family based in this area. To mark his capture of the mine in 1561, Mohri Motonari (1497–1571), the head of the family, built a simple temple on a slope above the Ginzan River and installed a wooden likeness of himself within the temple's main hall.

After the warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) conquered all of Japan and established a central government in Edo (present-day Tokyo) in 1603, his shogunate assumed direct control of the silver mine. The Mohri territory was greatly reduced, confined to the province of Choshu at the western end of Honshu. Motonari's sanctuary presided quietly over the Iwami Ginzan area for centuries under the Tokugawa, until war again encroached upon the silver mine. In 1866 advancing troops from Choshu and Satsuma (in Kyushu) came across the temple. The Choshu soldiers, who were fighting against the Tokugawa forces in a conflict that would eventually bring about the end of the era of the shogunate, were delighted to find a statue of their legendary general inside.

Ultimately, after the anti-shogunate forces won the war, the Choshu men built a new sanctuary on the same site—a Shinto shrine this time, in keeping with the new government's policy of cultivating the native religion as a vehicle of modern nationalism. In 1943, the Toyosaka Shrine was partially engulfed by a landslide, but the ornate gate, the distinctive main sanctuary (*honden*), and the worship hall (*haiden*) survive today. The original Mohri Motonari figurine is sadly no longer present.