

Sahimeyama Shrine

Sahimeyama Shrine stands on a hill about 200 meters from the entrance to the Ryugenji mining tunnel, one of the central sights at Iwami Ginzan. When the silver mine flourished in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, this site was both the spiritual and physical center of a large mining settlement that spread out across the entire hillside around the shrine.

The sanctuary enshrines Kanayamahiko no Mikoto, the Shinto god of mining, and is built directly above what was once one of the most abundant silver veins in the area. Miners and their families, who said their daily prayers at the shrine, lived in houses built on artificially flattened and terraced ground in the vicinity. While none of the houses remain, many of the stone walls built to fortify the terraced ground can still be seen.

Sahimeyama Shrine has remained a key religious institution throughout the history of Iwami Ginzan; its current buildings date to 1819 and include an unusually large worship hall (*haiden*). The large worship hall was designed to accommodate performances of *kagura* dances to honor Shinto deities that remain a core part of folk traditions in the Iwami region.