

Sakaneguchi Checkpoint Site

When the central government in Edo (present-day Tokyo) assumed direct control of Iwami Ginzan in the early 1600s, a fence was built around the silver mine and checkpoints established at all exits to regulate the flow of people and goods into and out of the mining area. The guards at these checkpoints were tasked with ensuring that taxes were paid on goods entering the mine, that silver destined for the government's coffers was not smuggled out, and that only people authorized to work and/or live in the fenced-off zone entered it. There were 10 checkpoints around the central mining area and many more throughout the Ginzan Goryo, the area under direct government control, which encompassed some 150 nearby villages. Sakaneguchi was the last checkpoint on the road to the port of Yunotsu, the main conduit for transport of materials to and from the mine, and therefore particularly important. No trace remains of the checkpoint building, which was where the nearest house now stands, but the road to Yunotsu is still intact. From Sakaneguchi, it leads over a mountain pass and through the village of Nishita to the port, five hours away on foot.