

Ishigane Senjojiki Settlement Site

In the early 1600s, the relatively flat, terrace-like expanse near the summit of Mt. Sennoyama hosted several mining settlements, including Ishigane, Ishigane Fujita, and Ishigane Senjojiki. Populated during the Iwami Ginzan silver mine's greatest period of prosperity, these settlements centered on a road that led down the hillside into the Hondani valley, another important mining hub. This road, now reconstructed, was about 2 meters wide and lined with buildings on both sides. The remains of refining pits, leftover ore, and other archaeological evidence discovered in the 1990s on the southeast side of the terrace, in what was once Ishigane Senjojiki, proved that miners and their families both lived and worked here, dressing, smelting, and refining silver ore mined in nearby tunnels. Their homes, which doubled as workshops, had clay walls for fire safety, and fresh water—a prerequisite for life in a place this isolated—was carried from a nearby well. None of the structures remain of what was once a large community (as suggested by the name Senjojiki, or “a thousand tatami mats”), but the openings of several mining tunnels can be seen along the hillside. The tunnels were dug using only chisels and hammers, and the time and effort required resulted in their being just wide enough for a miner to squeeze through.