

## Tochihatadani Settlement Site

The Tochihatadani valley is the site of one of the oldest mining communities at Iwami Ginzan. Dating back to the mid-1500s, the settlement was expanded as the silver mine flourished in the late 1500s and early 1600s and remained inhabited at least into the middle of the Edo period (1603–1867). Miners and their families lived in houses built on flattened and terraced ground, and they likely worshiped at the several Buddhist temples that appear in Edo-period descriptions of Tochihatadani. While none of the homes or religious sites remain, some of the stone retaining walls built to fortify the terraces can still be seen. The openings of several mining tunnels are also visible along the hillside.

Besides having been settled early, Tochihatadani is notable for having been one of the more international communities at Iwami Ginzan. The Korean and Chinese residents who figure in records concerning the site may have been technical advisors, who helped relay knowledge of advanced ore processing techniques to Japan. Among these techniques was the *haifuki* (cupellation) method of refining silver, invented on the Korean peninsula and introduced to Iwami Ginzan in 1533. This year is considered a turning point in the history of the mine, because the *haifuki* method made it possible to produce large quantities of the high-purity silver that Iwami Ginzan became renowned for and that contributed to the world economy from the mid-1500s onward.