

Tomb of Yoshioka Izumo

On a forested hillside high above the Ginzan River stands the lone tomb of a man who played a significant part in boosting silver and gold mining throughout Japan in the early 1600s. Born in the province of Izumi (near present-day Osaka), Yoshioka Hayato initially worked as a mine official at Iwami Ginzan under the Mohri family, which controlled the silver mine from 1562. When the warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), now known as the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate that ruled Japan from 1603 to 1867, gained control over Iwami Ginzan in 1600, he appointed Okubo Nagayasu (1545–1613), one of his most trusted allies, to supervise the mine. A skilled administrator who left politics to the politicians, Okubo recruited Yoshioka, who was valued for his management skills and ability to locate silver veins.

Okubo sent Yoshioka on assignments to several mines administered by the shogunate, including the silver mines of Izu (in present-day Shizuoka Prefecture) and the Aikawa gold and silver mine on Sado Island (Niigata Prefecture). He produced impressive results, which earned him fame, fortune, and the honorary name Izumo, after the province located east of Iwami Ginzan. When Yoshioka Izumo died in 1614, he was buried at Gokurakuji Temple, one of the most prestigious sites of worship in the area. Gokurakuji is long gone, but the tombstone of Yoshioka Izumo—re-erected by his descendants in 1813—remains on the former site of the temple cemetery.