

Monument to Prayers for the Prosperity of Iwami Ginzan

The site of what was once Ryushoji Temple is now a quiet grove at the end of a dirt road, along which little more than a single stone monument reminds visitors of the place's illustrious past. The inscription on the monument reads "place of prayers for the prosperity of Iwami Ginzan"—an indication that Ryushoji was one of three religious sites chosen for an annual ritual to pray for a prosperous year of mining. This ceremony took place on the twentieth day of the new year and involved the magistrate (the central government's representative at Iwami Ginzan) visiting Ryushoji, Sahimeyama Shrine in Kobuyamadani, and Kanzeonji Temple in the town of Omori to conduct prayers. Why these three sanctuaries were chosen is not entirely clear, but they all appear to have enjoyed the favor of the magistrate's office. The selection of Ryushoji, a Soto Zen temple, Sahimeyama, a Shinto shrine, and Kanzeonji, a Shingon Buddhist institution, also appears to reflect the religious diversity of Iwami Ginzan, the population of which was varied in terms of both geographical origins and social background.