

Seisuiji Temple

Seisuiji is a Shingon Buddhist temple that figures extensively in the history of Iwami Ginzan going back to the latter half of the sixteenth century. It was originally located on the side of Mt. Sennoyama, around which the silver mine was spread out, and attracted the reverence of warlords and commoners alike. It was at Seisuiji where Yasuhara Denbei, a prospector who discovered one of the most abundant silver veins at Iwami Ginzan, is said to have prayed before hitting the mother lode in 1602. The ornate jacket Yasuhara received from shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) as a reward for his contribution to the shogunate's coffers was donated to Seisuiji. The jacket remains the property of the temple but is now in the keeping of the Kyoto National Museum.

Seisuiji was moved to its current site in 1878, when an existing Buddhist structure on the premises was repurposed as the temple's main hall. The hall houses a gilded statue of Juichimen Kannon, the eleven-headed bodhisattva of compassion, and its lattice ceiling is decorated with the family emblems of samurai and merchants who made donations to the temple. Seisuiji's current main gate was added in 1931, when it was relocated from an obsolete temple that once administered Sahimeyama Shrine, the silver mine's main Shinto sanctuary. The gate is guarded by a pair of stone statues: on the right is Fudo Myo-o, one of the Five Wisdom Kings, who is ever ready to unleash his anger on demons and other enemies of Buddhism, and on the left stands Bishamonten, chief among the Four Guardian Kings and a powerful guardian deity.