Eisenji Temple

Eisenji, a temple of the Soto school of Zen Buddhism, overlooks central Omori from its hillside site just west of the town's main street. Eisenji was founded in 1596 and figures in a well-known local legend about how Iwami Ginzan was saved from disaster in 1732. In that year, a pest devastated crops throughout western Japan, causing widespread famine. The magistrate Ido Heizaemon (1672–1733), who represented the Tokugawa shogunate (central government) at the silver mine, decided to use the rice reserves at his disposal to feed the people without waiting for permission from his superiors. He also waived the tax payments from the local villages, which were to be made in rice. But his greatest achievement was to introduce an alternative crop. A traveling priest introduced Ido to sweet potatoes, which the magistrate then had planted throughout the lands under his control. According to the story, Ido's policies meant that not a single person starved to death at Iwami Ginzan, and his leadership was praised far and wide.

Eisenji, where the priest is said to have told Ido about sweet potatoes, burned down in 1800 in a fire that destroyed most of Omori. Its main hall was rebuilt seven years later, and a massive gate was added in 1853. This structure caused some controversy at the magistrate's office, which thought it too similar to the gate at the mausoleum of the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604–1651) in Nikko. Eisenji was ordered to tear down the gate, but the lack of a resident priest meant that the order could not be executed immediately. The gate eventually outlived the Tokugawa shogunate, which was overthrown in 1867, and stands over the entrance of the temple today.