

Izu Kokeshi (Ginzan Store and Workshop)

The television drama *Oshin*, set in the early 1900s, tells the story of Oshin, a girl from rural Yamagata Prefecture who must navigate personal hardship and tumultuous societal changes. As a child, Oshin was given a Ginzan *kokeshi*, a traditional wooden doll, to remind her of her family when she moved away from home. For three generations, the Izu family have handcrafted these same wooden dolls, which have become symbolic of Ginzan.

Izu Kokeshi started as a small craft shop in Ginzan Onsen in 1922, selling the traditional wooden dolls shaped from a single piece of wood and painted to resemble a child dressed in a formal kimono. Ginzan Onsen served as a setting for *Oshin*. When it aired in 1983 it became a touchstone of national cultural identity, and Ginzan's popularity soared. The doll featured on the show was handcrafted by Izu Kokeshi, and to capitalize on the publicity, they began to sell *Oshin kokeshi* dolls like the one in the drama. *Oshin kokeshi* are distinguished from other dolls by the ribbons painted into their bob-style haircuts. The business grew, and to keep up with demand they opened a factory workshop on the road to Ginzan Onsen in 1988. The workshop offers an introduction to *kokeshi* painting with reservations.

In addition to *Oshin kokeshi*, Izu sells another trademarked type of doll: *tanjo kokeshi*. These dolls celebrate the birth (*tanjo*) of a child, and are custom-made to the child's exact weight and height at birth. Beyond traditional dolls, there are many other wooden handicrafts for sale at the factory workshop.