

Split Rowhouse

This rowhouse contains separate living quarters for the *murage* (foreman) and staff of the ironworks. An entire family lived in each compact unit, and the occupants of the rowhouse all used two communal village baths. Private baths were available only to the *murage* on duty and to the assistant manager and his family.

The costs of housing the workers, including any significant maintenance, were covered by the Tanabe family, the owners of Sugaya Ironworks. They hoped that by providing these basic necessities, they could entice workers to remain in the village rather than seek employment at other ironworks in the region.

While the manager directed his staff to handle the business activities of the ironworks, the *murage* was responsible for all technical aspects associated with the production of iron and steel. The *murage* ensured that the underground structure of the *takadono* workshop had been built properly, constructed the clay furnace before each operation, and had the challenging task of determining when and how much iron sand and charcoal should be added to the furnace.

Much of this specialized knowledge was considered a trade secret and was shared only with select individuals. This was one reason why the Tanabe family took pains to secure and retain a skilled *murage* to lead their smelting crew.