

Tochihatadani Site

This valley is the site of one of the oldest former mining communities at Iwami Ginzan. Dating back to the mid-1500s, the settlement was home to hundreds of miners and their families, who lived in houses built on flattened and terraced ground along the mountainsides. Residents said their daily prayers to Kanayamahiko no Mikoto, the Shinto deity of mining, at Sahimeyama Shrine in the center of the valley, and they buried their dead at several Buddhist temples that were built in the area.

Silver ore extracted from mining sites nearby was crushed and sifted to isolate the parts containing silver, smelted, and refined at a processing facility that stood across the river from this location. While only some of the foundations remain of the refinery, where ore was heated to temperatures as high as 850 degrees Celsius, its buildings likely had fire-resistant earthen walls, several windows, and chimneys in every room to let out smoke and sulfurous gases.

None of the miners' homes remain in Tochihatadani, but some of the stone retaining walls built to fortify the terraces are still intact. The openings of many mining tunnels are visible throughout the hillside, and Sahimeyama Shrine still towers over the valley, which was inhabited to at least the late Edo period (1603–1867).