The Sado Complex of Heritage Mines, Primarily Gold Mines

Currently on Japan’s Tentative List for UNESCO World Heritage

On Sado Island, which is off the coast of mainland Japan, there were some large-scale mines which had been developed from the middle of the 16th century, and those remains are preserved in good condition. Sado Gold and Silver Mine is now aiming to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In November 2010, Sado Gold and Silver Mine was inscribed on Japan’s World Heritage Tentative List, under the title of “The Sado Complex of Heritage Mines, Primarily Gold Mines”.
The Value of Sado Gold and Silver Mine

Sado Island is located offshore from Niigata in the Sea of Japan. Sado is a remote island with a landmass of 855 square kilometers. The development of Sado Gold and Silver Mine was fully underway by the middle of the 16th century, and during the Edo Period (1603-1867), it provided the resources to support a monetary economy both in and outside of Japan as the largest gold and silver mining operation in the nation. The landscape of the gold and silver mine and the mining town formed along with it are still visible today, while the remnants of mining-related facilities from each period of mining history are well preserved. During the Meiji Restoration, which started in 1868, advanced technology from the West was also introduced to further Japan’s modernization. A group of former mining-related facilities are preserved as modern industrial heritage sites in Aikawa Gold and Silver Mine, the hub of gold and silver mining at the time.

As such, there are a variety of mine-related heritage sites and cultural landscapes, cultivated over the past 400 years, that are still well preserved all over Sado Island. Sado Island is known as a unique place where cutting-edge mining technology from various periods can be observed across the island.

Also, a variety of religions, performing arts and customs were introduced by people from all over Japan who came to Sado to support the development of the mining industry. These new cultures blended with the original Sado culture, which led to the blossoming of an entirely new culture unique to the island.

Sado Gold and Silver Mine consists of four major mines.

A : Nishimikawa Alluvial Gold Deposits
B : Niibo Silver Mine
C : Tsurushi Silver Mine
D : Aikawa Gold and Silver Mine