

3 Bentendô *Benten Hall*

The beautiful statue of the goddess Benten is supposed to have been carved by Jigaku Daishi in the Heian era. Benten is supposed to protect people born in the Year of the Snake. She promotes intelligence, happiness and skillfulness. She also brings good luck in business so that it is said that to pray to her, you should also give money. You should not approach as a couple. If you do, and pray for a good relationship, it will have the opposite effect. The pond in front of the Bishamondô is called Gama no Ike, or Toad Pond. When it was drained for repairs to the dam in 1990 many broken dishes from the end of the Heian era were found.



era. They were used for Shishimae (Lion dances) at Takkoku. Fudô is the god who protects people born in the Year of the Chicken. To avoid bad luck, you should present a sword to the god. Fudô gives protection from fire and afflictions of the eye. You should wash your eyes with water from the Akadô just below the hall. In this way, you are supposed to have your greatest wish fulfilled once in your life.



4 Fudôdô *Fudô Hall*

This hall was dedicated by Chishô Taishi and originally sited above the Himemachi waterfall where it was rebuilt by Fujiwara no Motohira. It was moved to Takkoku in 1789. The rare statue of the god Fudô, designated as a prefectural treasure, is carved from a single block of katsura wood and dates from the late Heian period. The lion head mask on the right at his knees dates from the Muromachi era and on the left from the Edo

5 Kondô *Golden Hall*

The original Kondô, founded in 802, was situated on the far side of the river. This was burnt down in 1490 and the temple's functions were carried out in another building called the Kyakuden on the site of the present Kondô. This was destroyed at the Meiji Restoration. Construction of the present building started in 1987 using entirely traditional techniques. It was completed in 1996.

The Yakushi Buddha inside the Kondô is carved from a holy pine tree from Shinkyôsan, the mountain behind Takkoku no Iwaya. This Buddha is beneficial for people with worries and can help to strengthen the body and



heal illnesses as well as promote a long life and fulfill various other wishes.

Hero of Tôhoku's old history

In recent times there has been an idea that sei-i tai-shogun (barbarian-quelling great-general) Sakanoue no Tamuramaro (758-811) was an invader sent by the central government of Kyoto to crush Akurô the local hero of this area who fought against him. However, if one considers the local legends of Takkoku, such as that of the princess confined

in a basket (Kagonohime), the place where Akurô waited to seize the princess (Himemachinotaki) and the rock where her severed hair was hung (Katsuraishi), it is clear that the local people were actually suffering. They were so glad to be relieved from the tyranny of Akurô,

that they honoured Sakanoue no Tamuramano with the title Bishamontennô (Bishamon's king).

The temples, shrines and legends connected with this shogun in Tôhoku are as numerous as stars. Sakanoue is the real hero of Tôhoku history, and Takkoku no Iwaya is the source of the legends about him. Day and night, sincerely offer prayers of thanks to him for the foundation of Takkoku no Iwaya 1,200 years ago.

Head Priest of Takkoku no Iwaya.

Betto Takkoku Seikôji,

Aza Kitazawa - 16
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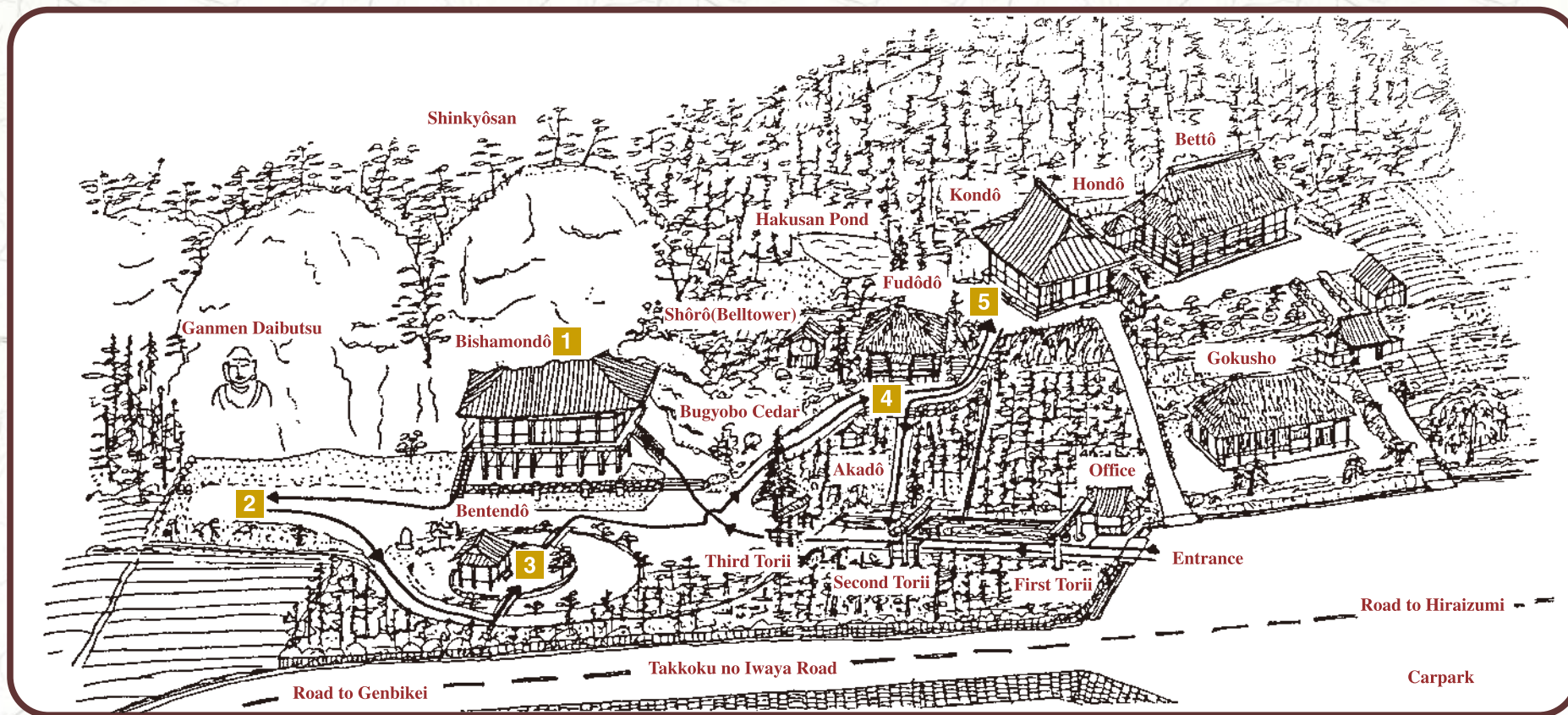
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Takkoku no Iwaya Bishamondô.

Takkoku no Iwaya Bishamon hall, and the land surrounding it, was established as a religious precinct by Sakanoue no Tamuramaro in the 20th year of Enryaku (801). It is forbidden to kill any animals here or pick any plants. Visitors are also requested not to smoke, eat or drink, nor bring any pets.

We recommend that visitors wishing to pray should follow the route marked.



1 Bishamondō *Bishamon Hall*

1200 years ago in this area, then called Ezo, the warlord Akurō Takamaro, infamous for oppressing the people by stealing women and children, had his headquarters in a fortress in the cavern at Takkoku. The Emperor Kammu gave the title "barbarian subduing shogun" to Sakanoue no Tamuramaro, and dispatched him to bring the area under

Imperial control. Akurō was defeated in 801 and peace restored. To give thanks to the god of war Bishamon, Sakanoue no Tamuramaro had the Bishamondō built in the style of Kyoto's Kiyomizudera. He installed 108 statues of Bishamon and called it Iwaya Bishamondō, a place in which to pray for peace.

In the 11th century Minamoto no Yoriyoshi and later his son Yoshiie successfully fought

against the northern Abe clan. They offered prayers at Iwaya and gave land in thanks. Hiraizumi's Fujiwara no Kiyohira and his son Motohira endowed buildings and in 1189, Minamoto no Yoritomo gave thanks here after defeating his half brother Yoshitsune in the nearby battle of Koromogawa. In medieval times the powerful Kasai family also worshipped here.

The Bishamondō was burnt down in 1490 but immediately rebuilt. In the Sengoku era a fire destroyed all the other buildings. In 1615, Date Masamune rebuilt the Bishamondō and gave lands. In 1946, fire spread from a neighbouring farm and engulfed the Bishamondō. The main figure of Buddha and twenty other statues were all that could be saved. The temple was rebuilt

in 1961, thus the present building is the fifth since its dedication.

In its deepest recesses, is a statue of Buddha supposed to have been carved by Jigaku Daishi in the Heian era. It is enclosed in a cabinet presented by the Date family. The figures inside are only opened at intervals and may next be seen in 2042.

Bishamon, is a god of war who protects those born in the Year of the Tiger. Bishamon fights demons and invites happiness. If you make a wish for wealth, or a good position in your company, for meeting a suitable partner or for fertility, and for success in studying, he will intercede on your behalf. He is also a god of war so that if you have any conflict, you can also pray to him. Prayers to Bishamon are supposed to be most efficacious.

Since old times, it has been considered a good idea to write your wish on a wooden supplication board (*ema*). You can pray by clapping, or silently with hands together.

2 Ganmen Daibutsu *Stone carving of Buddha*

There is a legend that this Buddha was carved by Minamoto no Yoshiie firing arrows at the sandstone cliff, but the figure probably dates from the Muromachi era. The 16.5m high Buddha is one of five large Buddhas in Japan and is known as the Northern Rock Buddha. It is called Amida Butsu and commemorates the deaths of soldiers in two local wars in the 11th century. Originally a full figure representing the seated Buddha in heaven, the lower part

was destroyed by an earthquake in 1896. Even now, continual maintenance is needed to protect it against the effects of weather. You are requested to pray with hands together to show respect for ten thousand souls.

