



◀ **Carvings on Furring Wood Sidings of the Inner Hall**

奥殿桐羽目の彫刻

All the carvings of the inner hall are elaborately engraved. The carvings on the furring wood sidings on the rear of the inner hall depicting ancient rites and practices of China are particularly magnificent. The carvings are rich in emotion depicting the “Seven Deities of Good Fortune and Play by Chinese Children” and other objects. The carvings remind us of the grace of the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568 - 1600). Started in 2003, the works to repair and preserve the entire main building, which is designated by the State as a national cultural treasure, were completed in 2010, resurrecting the original form when it was first built.

Eagle and Monkey ▶

(Carving on the Main Building)

鷲と猿 (本殿彫刻)

The carving was reported to have been carved by Hidari Jingoro (temple carpenter and sculptor in the late 16th to early 17th centuries). An eagle rescues a monkey which is about to fall into a rapid current. The monkey represents the uncontrollable evil passions of humans and the eagle saving the monkey is indeed the principal image of Shoden.



▶ **Play by Chinese Children**

(Part of Carvings on the Main Building)

唐子遊び (本殿彫刻の一部)



▲ **Gong**

(Cultural Property designated by Saitama Prefecture) 罽口

The gong is made of bronze donated to Shodenzan Temple in the 2nd year of Rekiō (1339) during the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties. It measures 31cm in diameter. The inscription engraved on the gong reads “Shodendo of Fukugawa Village in the Province of Musashi” and is a valuable item in the administrative history of the area. It verifies that the Menuma district was then called “Fukugawa Village.”

▲ **Fabric Woven with Yarn Made of False Nettles**

(Cultural Property designated by Saitama Prefecture) 紵絲斗帳

This fabric was woven during the Shizong period of the Ming Dynasty of China (16th century) and was brought to Japan, weaving birds and clouds in deep red on a navy blue ground. An inscription is written at one end of the fabric.

This piece was donated to Shodenzan Temple by Lord Narita Nagayasu, the owner of Oshi Castle. Fifth Tokugawa Shogun Tsunayoshi examined and admired it and donated his two writings out of respect for the quality of the work. This event is recorded in the “An Essay on Weights and Measures” authored by Ogyu Sorai (1666 - 1728, a leading Confucian scholar) also.



Annual Events of **Menuma SHODENZAN Temple**

First temple visit of the New Year
New Year's Day

Setsubun Ceremony – Toshitoko and Toshionna
(men and women who were born in a year with the same Chinese zodiac sign as the current year) throw roasted soybeans.
February 3

Ceremony to view the principal image being bathed in a bath filled with oil in worship of the image
(A visit once per year to Shodenzan Temple to see this ceremony is recommended)
Second Saturday and Sunday in March

Cherry blossom viewing
Early April

Spring grand festival
(A kimono-clad children's procession in a traditional festival)
April 18 and 19

Buddhist rite of burning brushwood sticks on the altar as a light to invoke divine help
April 19

Anniversary of death of Lord Saito Sanemori
May 21 on lunar calendar

Buddhist All Souls' Days (Bon Festival)
August 13 to 15

Autumnal grand festival (October 19 - Buddhist rite of burning brushwood sticks on the altar as a light to invoke divine help)
October 18 and 19

Grand chrysanthemum viewing party
November 1 to 15

Praying festival for children of three, five and seven years of age who dress up in traditional kimonos
Mid-November

Star Festival, praying festival for warding off evil fortune
December 22

Ringling of New Year's Eve bells
December 31

Menuma of **Musashi Province**

Nikko of **Saitama Prefecture**

妻沼聖天山歡喜院
SHODENZAN Temple



Holy Ground for Prayers dedicated to Great Sage Vinayaka
(God of Wisdom, Prosperity and Good Fortune)

Saint No. 88 of the Kanto Region's 88 Saints' Holy Grounds; No. 7 of the 12 Holy Grounds in Musashi Province
Buddhist Deity of Mercy No. 16 of the Kanto Region's 33 Deities of Mercy; No. 13 Pilgrim Spot in Shinshikoku of Hatara County

Deified Spirit Shoden 聖天さま

Good Fortune

Warding off of Misfortune

Matchmaking

The history of Shodenzan Temple dates back to the third year of the Jisho Era (1179) when, as a local governor, Lord Saito Betto Sanemori enshrined the Deified Spirit Shoden, the main object of worship venerated from generation to generation, at the temple. Lord Sanemori was known for his personality that was rich in bravery, justice and humanity as cited in the Tale of Heike, Tale of Hogen, Genpei Seisuiki (the Rise of the Minamoto and Fall of the Taira), Yokyoku (Noh Song) Sanemori, Kabuki Tale of Sanemori and other ancient tales and songs. In the eighth year of Kenkyu (1197), Saito Rokusanenaga, the second son of Lord Sanemori, became priest Ashobo Ryoou and founded the Kangi House of this temple.

Shoden's principal image was officially named “Great Sage Kangiten” and is worshipped in Japan also after Saint Kobo, the founder of the Shingon Sect of Buddhism, who asked it to be brought to Japan from China as a guardian deity of Buddhism together with esoteric Buddhism. Shoden is embraced as a god of good fortune and protector against misfortune.

The principal image is enshrined in the center of a priest's staff and is a Buddhist statue that is usually kept hidden from the public. As the head in the priest's staff of deity, the principal image is an important cultural property designated by the State.

The deified spirit of Shoden in Menuma is known as one of the three great deified spirits of Shoden in Japan and is especially renowned for divine efficacy in matchmaking. The deified spirit of Shoden is known for making all good matches such as family health and safety, business prosperity, warding off of misfortune, good fortune, traffic safety and success in school examinations, to say nothing of strengthening the bonds of married couples. Shodenzan Temple is visited by many people who offer prayers.

Main Building 御本殿

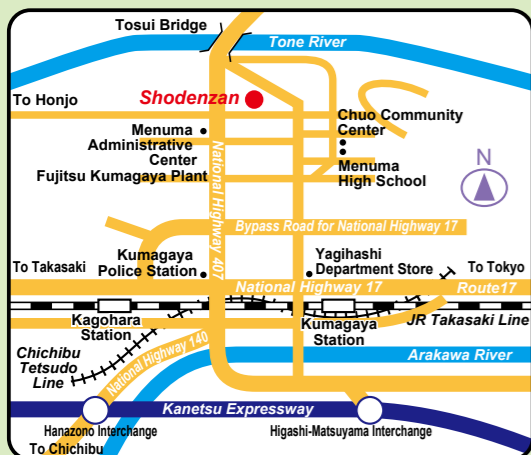
(National cultural treasure designated by the State)

The main building has an architecture in which a temple at the front for worshippers is joined to the main sanctuary by a paved room, consisting of the Inner Hall 34m² in floor area, Intermediate Hall (27m²) and Hall of Worship (127m²). This building style is “Byogata-shiki Gongenzukuri”, in which multi buildings are combined as one style. The Inner Hall has an architectural design called “Yatsunomezukuri”. All the parts and walls of the buildings are decorated with carvings and the buildings are precious ancient cultural remnants of the middle part of the Edo Period (1600 - 1868), painted in brilliant colors. The main building was designed and built by Hayashi Hyogo Masakiyo, a craftsman of Menuma and a descendant of Hirauchi Masanobu who was active as a master carpenter for the Works Department of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Twenty-five years after the main building was being built, the work was handed over to his son, Masanobu, for completion. It was completed in the 10th year of the Horeki era (1760).

27th Temple of 100 Flowery Temples in Eastern Japan

Cherry

Flowers of the four seasons bloom throughout the year in the gardens of Shodenzan Temple, including Yoshino, Hikan, double-flowering and Kawazu winter cherry trees.



HOW TO GET TO SHODENZAN TEMPLE

- ★ At Kumagaya Station of Takasaki Line of Japan Railway or Joetsu Shinkansen Line, take a bus bound for “Ohta,” “Nishi-Koizumi” or “Menuma Shoden-mae” operated by Asahi Bus Co. Get off at “Shoden-mae” bus stop.
- ★ From Hanazono Interchange of Kanetsu Expressway, drive on National Highway 140 and 407, and travel from Noborito Intersection toward the urban area.

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◀ **Gundali**
(tantric Buddhist deity)
軍荼利明王

One of the five guardian gods together with the God of Fire and Trailokyavijaya (Vanquisher of the Three Worlds). The original vow of Gundali is to lead people to spiritual enlightenment by being strict with them out of love. The waterfall represents delicious water.

▶ **Bell Belvedere 鐘楼**

The Bell Belvedere stands on a floor area of 13㎡. It was completed in November in the 11th year of the Horeki era (1762). The master carpenter was Hayashi Hyogo Masanobu Jr. The bell was recast in 1955 and it now tells time in the morning and evening everyday as a bell of peace familiar to the local citizens in their daily lives.



▶ **Tower of Peace 平和の塔**

Built in 1958, the Tower of Peace is of a Tahōtō type and is made entirely of Japanese zelkova wood. The principal image of the tower is the 11-faced Buddhist deity of mercy and enshrines the holy names of those that died in wars. Memorial services for the spirits of ancestors and babies lost through miscarriage or abortion are also conducted. Compared with prayers for good health and prosperity at the main building, memorial services for the repose of the dead and for the atonement of sins are offered here.

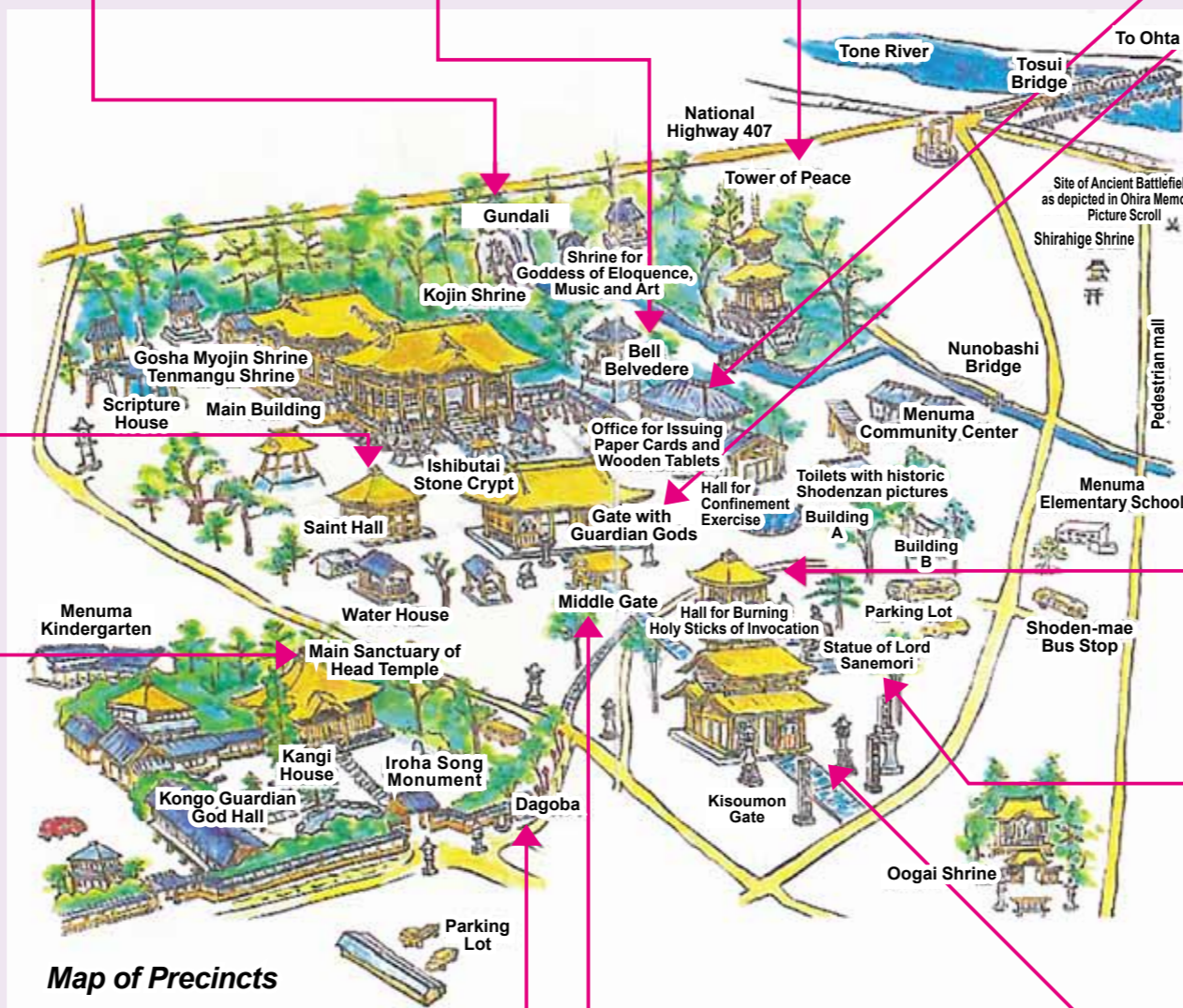


▶ **Office for Receiving Applications for Confinement in Temple for Devotional Purposes and for Issuing Strips of Paper and Wooden Tablets Inscribed with Words of Religious Significance 籠堂受付・お札授与所**

The office was additionally built in conjunction with the ceremony for exhibiting Buddhist images in 1996.

▶ **Saint Hall 大師堂**

The hall is dedicated to Priest Kobo, who founded the Shingon Sect of Buddhism. Reported to have been built in 1197, the saint hall of a storehouse construction with earthen walls was rebuilt in November 1995 as a major reconstruction project. The Saint Hall is the final, most important temple among 88 Holy Grounds in the Kanto Region. More and more people, dressed in white Buddhist pilgrim's attire, come to the temple to fulfill their sacred vows.



▶ **Gate with Guardian Gods 仁王門**

Reportedly built in the first year of the Manji era (1658), the gate was destroyed in 1891 by a typhoon. The gate was rebuilt in 1894. The guardian gods on the left and right remain intact since the gate was originally built in 1658 and are masterpieces that remind us of the pervading spirit of the Muromachi Period (1333 - 1568). The roof of the gate was refurbished in 1982.



▶ **Hall for Burning Holy Sticks of Invocation 護摩堂**

Located in front of the middle gate, the hall provides memorial services for Buddhist rites of burning small sticks of wood to invoke the divine help of esoteric Buddhist teachings of the Shingon sect. Prayers for traffic safety of automobiles are offered in front of the hall.



▶ **Statue of Lord Sanemori 実盛公銅像**

A statue of Lord Sanemori was erected in 1996 as a project to commemorate the 818th anniversary of the founding of the temple. The sound mall emits the song of "Saito Sanemori," which was a song created for music classes of elementary schools, praising the benefit derived from the virtue of Lord Sanemori.



▶ **Main Sanctuary of Head Temple 本坊本堂**

The main building was built by Lord Sanemori dedicated to the principal image. The head temple was built by his son, Ryoo, a high-ranking priest, as a venue of ascetic practices for ascetic devotees serving the principal image. The main building is an exercise hall for praying and the head temple is an exercise hall for ascetic practices.



▶ **Buddhist Deity of Mercy for Health and Long Life 健康長寿観音**

The deity is the principal image of the 16th temple among the 33 Deities of Mercy in the Kanto Region for warding off senility.



▶ **Dagoba (Cultural Property designated by Saitama Prefecture) 板碑**

A typical stone monument of the Zenkoji Temple type built in the Kamakura period (1185 - 1333). Images of three Buddhist saints are engraved and the monument has a high academic value also. The rear of the monument is engraved with mantras of the Buddhist triad. It is not known exactly when it was built. The monument is located in front of the gate of the head temple and measures 177cm in height and 12cm in thickness.



▶ **Shikyakumon [Four-Legged] Gate (Middle Gate) 四脚門(中門)**

Featuring the characteristics of the Muromachi Period (1333 - 1568) such as patterns on ends of wood and decorative boards in the center of side gables, the gate is a valuable building. The local residents call the gate the "Jingoro Gate". The gate was refurbished in 1990.



▶ **Kisoumon Gate**

(Important Cultural Property designated by the State) 貴惣門

The gate is the first temple gate of Shodenzan Temple and is 16m high. Three gables that are characteristic of multiple layer construction are combined, featuring a magnificent structural beauty that is rarely seen in other parts of the country. The exteriors of the gate are decorated with elaborate carvings. The gate has images of two guardians, the Guardian of the East and Guardian of the North, on its left and right. The gate was built in the 4th year of the Kaei era (1851). The master carpenter was Hayashi Masamichi, who was a craftsman of then Menuma Town. The roof of the gate was refurbished in 1987.

