

# Kurume History Walks

## No.8 Stone Artifacts in Daizenji Temple 1 大善寺の石造美術を訪ねて 1

Many artifacts in Kurume are mostly religious, such as shrine gate (*torii*), guardian dog statues (*komainu*), and the Buddhist guardian deity of children (*jizo*). The stonemasons from Yamakita, Ukiha, and Nagano, Yame (these are the districts of the cities next to Kurume) were very active so that the stone culture flourished in this region and that we can still see their works. We focus here on those that remain around Daizenji, Kurume.

### Daizen-ji Temple

It is a temple of the Tendai sect and its principal image is Amida Nyorai (Amitabha). They say that it was founded between 810 and 824. It lost the temple name in 1871 (for the anti-Buddhist movement) and became the Tamatare-jinja Shrine (mentioned below). However, in 1926 its followers rebuilt it at the present location in the Buddhism revival movement. In the precinct, there are three stone tablets:

- Engraved with a Sanskrit character of Ashuku Nyorai in a circle, 1634 (Kan'ei 11). Height 1.3 meters,
- Engraved with a Sanskrit character of Amida Nyorai in a circle, 1656 (Meireki 2). Height 0.95 meters.
- Engraved with a Sanskrit character of Dainichi Nyorai in a circle, 1659 (Manji 2). Height 0.72 meters.



Stone tablets of Daizen-ji Temple ㊦

\*Figure in a circle indicates that on the map of the last page of this number and the next.

### Daizenji Tamatare-gu Shrine

The shrine exists on the Hirokawa River. They say that it was founded in 672 for enriching three deities. It was a typical sanctuary of the syncretism of Shintoism and Buddhism. In 814, it owned forty-five residences of the monks and the estate of 3000 cho\* (30 km<sup>2</sup>) and flourished for five successive centuries. But the temple was abolished, as the above mentioned, under the Kami (deity, holy spirits) and Buddhas Separation Order of the Meiji government.

\* Cho (町) was a Japanese old unit. 1 cho is equivalent to about 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>

● **Kasahashi bridge**

A bridge used to run straight to the shrine hall from the town. It was only for ceremonial use.

In 1761, the Kurume Domain made a donation to build this bridge, however the flood swept it away soon. Then, in 1781, people rebuilt a bridge, 20 meters long and 2.5 meters wide, with a single pier that receives less water pressure than with several. Thin posts were attached between the middle part of the pier and the girder. From its umbrella-like shape, people called it Kasahashi (literally, umbrella bridge). Today, only the pier stone remains as the monumental stone in the shrine's precinct.

- (1) The monument on which the origin of the Kasahashi was described.
- (2) The monument includes an inscription of January 1781

● **Three stone Torii gates (*Ishi torii*)**

*Torii* is a shrine gate. The origin of term *torii* itself and its name are neither clear: from Japan or the Asian continent (India, China, or Korean); “bird (tori) stay (iru)”, or “people pass (toru) and enter (hairu)”.

1) **Genna Torii**

This gate stands on the approach to the shrine. The form is like the style of the Hizen Province (It is the roughly northwest part of Kyushu). According to its weathered condition, the horizontal parts should have replaced after the construction. When facing it, there is the inscription of the Lord Tanaka Tadamasu on the right column, and that of a samurai and the date 1618 (Genna 4) on the left. It is one of the oldest in the Chikugo Province.

2) **Hizen Torii**

Originally, this torii was at the front entrance. For the new construction of the below-mentioned torii, they moved it to the back entrance in 1934. Some parts show the Hizen style.

The right column, when facing to it, has an inscription of Arima Yoriyuki, the lord who donated it praying for long-lasting good luck in battle and prosperity of descendants, the date August 1771 and the stonemason’s name from Yamakita (in today’s Ukiha City).

3) **Otorii (grand *torii*)**

It was built in March 1934. Made of granite, it is the biggest in our province and relatively decorative as a



Kasahashi monument ①



Kasahashi monument ②



Genna Torii ③



Hizen Torii ④

torii. Each of columns and horizontal bars were made from a single stone from Tokushima.

● **Guardian Dog Statues (*komainu*)**

A pair of Guardian Dog Statues are located in front of the worship hall. The right one has the mouth open to emit a sound “a” and the left has it closed to utter a sound “um”. (A-um, together, symbolically represent the beginning and the end of all things.) Both have sharp eyes, the slender body and the curly hair falling over the shoulders. These throw out its bust, and that makes a forceful impression.

The inscription shows that the stonemasons were Shiraishi Genshichi Yasusuke and Rishichi Yasumoto, Yamakita village, and that the creation date is winter 1770. Other works of Genshichi exist in several shrines of Kurume.

Being the oldest in Kurume, these are valuable materials to understand the original type of Yamakita Guardian Dog Statue.

● **Blue-faced Guardian Deity monument (*Shomen Kongo to*)**

This tablet-shaped monument is 0.8 meters high and 0.9 meters wide. On the surface, it bears the inscription of the Deity name of Shomen Kongo and the construction date of March 1781. From the inscription on the back, its monument was erected for the commemoration of the dead members of the Koshin association.

The Koshin is a folk faith with Taoist origins, influenced by Buddhism and other local religions. It started in the Muromachi period (1336-1573). They say that every 60 days in the day's night of Koshin, three worms that live inside the human body go out to visit the god in order to report the sin of that person. Then, that night, the believers stayed awake to prevent worms from leaving the body.

Shomen Kongo who exterminate the plague is often seen as the main image on the monuments erected in the Edo period.



Otorii ⑤



Guardian Dog statues ⑥



Blue-faced Guardian Deity monument ⑦

● **Stone lantern (*Ishi toro*)**

The stone lantern is composed of, from the topmost portion, gem-shaped ornament (*hoju*), shade (*kasa*), burning place (*hibukuro*), platform (*chudai*), pole (*sao*) and basement (*kidan*).

There is a pair in front of the worship hall. It is made of Tuff stone by the stonemason, the same as the Guardian Dogs, but older than those (1762). And there is another pair of the same style, made of the same material, then we consider that the same stonemason constructed it.



Stone lantern ㊸



● **Jingu monument**

As a memorial of the visit to Ise Jingu shrine, people erected the stone monument. (Ise Jingu, of which the official name is simply Jingu, is located in the Mie Prefecture and one of the most important shrines.)

The monument bears an inscription of the worshippers' name. There are also three other Jingu monuments at Fujiyoshi Tenmangu nearby.



Jingu monument ㊸



**Location of Stone Artifacts**

Daizenji Tamatare-gu shrine

- ① Kasahashi monument
- ② Kasahashi monument
- ③ Genna torii
- ④ Hizen torii
- ⑤ Otorii
- ⑥ Guardian Dog statues
- ⑦ Blue-faced Guardian Deity monument
- ⑧ Stone lantern
- ⑨ Jingu monument
- ⑩ Basho's Haiku monument
- ⑪ Stone Tiger
- ⑫ Sai no Kami san (tutelary deity)
- ⑬ Horse-Dismounting Stone

**To be continued in our next issue.**

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Date of revision: March 31st, 2005 / Translated in June 2020