

Kurume History Walks

No.9 Stone Artifacts in Daizenji 2 大善寺の石造美術を訪ねて 2

Continuing from the previous issue, we introduce the stone artifacts of the Daizenji Tamatare-gu Shrine and its surrounding areas.

● Basho's Haiku monument

In the east of the worship hall, there is a rectangular stone pillar of 1.7 meters high, inscribed with Basho's haiku, the construction year (1814), and two petitioner's names

— *Haru mo yaya keshiki totonou tsuki to ume*

Spring haze, the atmosphere just so, with moon and plum blossom.

Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) is one of the greatest masters of haiku of the Edo period. There are almost a thousand haiku monuments of Basho across the country, almost 70 in Fukuoka Prefecture, and 8 in Kurume.

● Sai no Kami san (tutelary deity)

In the north of the main hall, there is a subsidiary shrine. Local people affectionately call the enshrined deity "Sai no Kami san".

Since ancient times, people have prayed to deities to prevent disasters, pests, and plagues. They offered trees festooned with a sacred rope at a top of a mountain, in a valley, or by an irrigation ditch in a rice field.

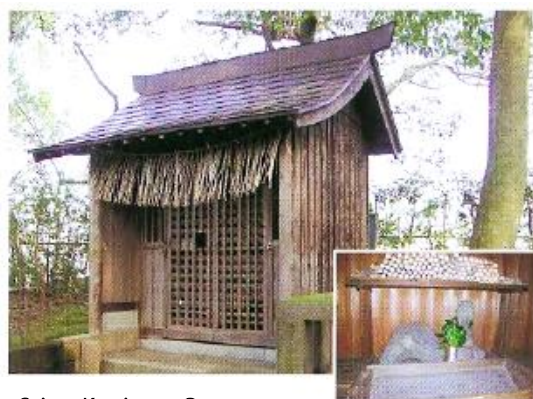
Around the 13th and the 15th century, people regarded tutelary deities of rice fields (Ta no Kami) and mountains (Yama no Kami) also as deities of good luck (Saiwai no Kami). Later, its name naturally changed to "Sai no Kami". In Kyushu, deities of fecundity were popular and were fused with Sai no Kami. Those were often depicted as reproductive organs.

Here, a phallus-formed stone artifact was enshrined in a wooden shelter. And, before the World War II, many local geishas came to visit, and they dedicated wooden phallus-formed artifacts.



Basho's Haiku monument ⑩

*Figure in a circle indicates that on the map of the last page in this and the previous issue.



Sai no Kami san ⑪

● **Horse-Dismounting Stone**
(Geba Ishi)

In the Edo period, a *gebafuda* (a signboard to notify that the horse riders had to dismount their horse for entering castles, temples, shrines) was placed at the entrance of the area. It is often wooden. However, here, the one near the grand Torii gate (*Otorii*) was made of stone and 1.75 meters high.



Stone Tiger ⑩



Horse-Dismounting Stone ⑬

● **Stone Tiger (Ishi Tora)**

It is a rare artifact, dedicated in 1926 by people who were born in a year of the Tiger (one of twelve Chinese zodiac signs) as the memorial of their sixtieth birthday.

Around Jizodo Hall

In the east of Tamatare-gu shrine, there is a Jizodo Hall (*Jizo* is a guardian deity). The *Jizo* statue in the hall has the inscription of 1715 (5th year of Shotoku era).



Piers ⑭

● **Piers and milestone**

Two bridge piers of the old one remain. One of them was reused as a monument on which the history of the bridge was inscribed.

We consider that the milestone was originally built at the approach of the bridge. It showed the direction of north and south with the inscription of “North, Kurume” and “South, Yanagawa”.

These three were made of the stone which were brought by ship from Amakusa (about 150 km away).



Milestone ⑮

● **Stone tablet of Three Jizos**

Three standing Jizos were engraved on a natural stone tablet 0.9 meters high, 1 meter wide and 10 centimeters thick. The sculptor and the period are unknown, although we consider it created during the mid-16th century (the late Muromachi period) by its expression style.



Stone Tablet of Three Jizos ⑯

Wart-Curing Jizo

A Jizo statue was enshrined at the entrance of a funeral hall on the opposite bank of the Hirokawa River from the Daizanji Tamagare-gu Shrine. It has the inscription of 1808 (the 5th year of the Bunka era). The worshipers believe they would get rid of warts if they pray to the Jizo.



Wart-Curing Jizo ⑮

Yoakezan Chonichi-ji Temple

This is a Zen temple of the Rinzai sect that Shinshi Eison Zenji (monk) established in 1245. (See Kurume History Walks No. 2 featuring Yoakezan Chonichi-ji Temple.)

In the schoolyard of Daizenji elementary school next to the temple, a memorial monument of Eison stands. It is called “*Fumo Rei Ato* (Remain of Barren Spirit)” related to the story that he was abandoned soon after his birth.

It is said that he was born of his father from one of the most important samurai clans and his mother from the local ruling family.

When he was born, strangely, he was emitting light from his mouth. His parents got so scared that they abandoned him in the bush in the backyard. It continued for seven days and seven nights.

Genrin Osho (monk) from the neighboring province dreamt of a boy who read the Lotus Sutra, emitting light and beautiful sound from the mouth. Then, the next morning, Genrin came to see around, found the baby, and took him back to his temple. That baby was Eison Zenji, who later went to study in the Sung dynasty of China and established the Yoakezan Chonichi-ji Temple.



Memorial monument of Eison ⑯

The temple name should have come from his legend. (Yoake means daybreak and Chonichi is morning sun).

The place where he was abandoned had been known as sterile ground. People feared the curse and built the monument in 1783 in order to calm the spirit.

Shomyoin Temple

This is a branch of Daihon-zan Zendo-ji Temple of the Jodo sect, having several stone monuments.

● Stone Tablet of Jizo

Designated a City Cultural Property, 1.21 meters high, 0.63 meters wide, and 5 centimeters thick, it has the inscription of 1421 (the 28th year of the Oei era).



Stone Tablet of Jizo ⑰

● Stone Statue of Ebisu

Ebisu is the god of the fishery, commerce, and luck. He is one of the Seven Gods of Fortune. The worship started in the Heian period (about the 9th - the 12th century) and became popular in the mid-Muromachi period (about the 14th - the 16th century).

He is generally depicted wearing the traditional clothes which an aristocratic class employed since the Heian period, carrying a fishing rod in the right hand and a sea bream in the left hand, and laughing. However, there are statues of different appearances in our province. "Japan's oldest statue of Ebisu" in Daizenji was recorded in an old book. We presume it is the stone statue representing a female deity, located in front of the Shomyoin Temple.



Stone Statue of Ebisu ⑱

Stone tablet of Jizo in Nakashima

This artifact is the stone tablet engraved with the Jizo of 94 cm high, 65 cm wide, and 10 cm thick. Its style and the sculpting technique is very similar to the one of Shomyoin Temple, then the same stonemason should have made it.



Stone Tablet of Jizo ⑳



- ⑭ Piers and Milestone
- ⑮ Stone Tablet of Daizen-ji Temple
- ⑯ Warts Curing Jizo
- ⑰ Memorial monument of Eison
- ⑱ Stone Tablet of Jizo
- ⑲ Stone Statue of Ebisu
- ⑳ Stone Tablet of Jizo in Nakashima

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