**Dazaifu Tenmangu and the Bakumatsu Period**

The Tokugawa shogunate ruled Japan between 1603 and 1867. However, the Japanese political system was changed forever dramatically after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 with the introduction of a centralized government that pivoted around the newly installed Emperor Meiji (1852–1912).

The final years of the Tokugawa period (1603–1867), referred to as Bakumatsu, were marked by extreme political change. The Bakumatsu years coincided with a sudden influx of foreigners bringing unfamiliar new ways and inventions, while deadly factionalism pitted old-guard feudalists supporters of the shogunate against proponents of political reform and loyalty to the emperor.

Before the Meiji Restoration, once-powerful noble families known as *kuge* were hunted down by those members of factions loyal to the shogunate. *Kuge* families were the Japanese aristocratic class living in Kyoto. They established that city as the capital in 794 and remained influential in Japanese society and politics throughout the following centuries. Toward the end of the Tokugawa shogunate, seven high-ranking members of *kuge* families were driven from their homes in Kyoto, and five of these members fled to Dazaifu. From 1865 to 1867, the group sheltered in at Enjuoin Temple within the grounds of Dazaifu Tenmangu, where they shared ideas that led to some of the building blocks of the new political system. Thus, Dazaifu Tenmangu was the backdrop to one of the most significant events in Japanese history.

Sanjo Sanetomi (1837–1891) was one member of this group of five. Sanjo went on to serve as the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal of Japan, and briefly, as interim prime minister in 1889. The items shown here were presented to Dazaifu Tenmangu by Sanjo: a helmet, a military fan, and a saddle with his family crest.