**Dharmapala Boulders (Gohōseki)**

Two legends surround this pair of moss-covered boulders. According to the first legend, Ototen and Wakaten, child avatars of the deities Fudō Myō-ō and Bishamonten, descended from the heavens and alighted upon these very stones when Engyōji’s founding abbot, Shōkū (910–1007), first arrived on Mt. Shosha in 966. Together, Ototen and Wakaten assisted Shōkū during the early days of his ascetic training. Ototen and Wakaten are known as *gohō-zenshin* (Sanskrit: *dharmapala*), or fierce defenders of Buddhist teachings. From this legend the stones came to be called Gohōseki, or “Dharmapala Boulders.” As protectors of Engyōji, Ototen and Wakaten have featured prominently in temple lore and traditions for over a millennium.

The stones are also known as “Benkei’s juggling balls” (*Benkei no otedama*) for their association with the legendary warrior monk Musashibō Benkei. Many myths and tall tales surround Benkei, but it is known that he studied at Engyōji as a young boy, and this fact has inspired a number of stories. According to legend, the young Benkei once tested his strength by juggling these boulders. Another tale describes a fight that broke out when Benkei was teased by his peers, leading to a catastrophic fire that destroyed the main buildings of Engyōji in 1331.