

This entrance was reserved for the heads of the Date clan and members of the Imperial family. The word *onari* referred to a visit by a high-ranking noble, an event so important that special entrances were built to receive the honored guest. Many of the architectural elements of this entrance, including the carved elephant heads and the cylindrical columns with pinched necks and bulbous bases, were inspired by the Chinese Tang dynasty (618–907). The angled arrangement of the granite flagstones is typical of Zen temples, as is the zig-zag layout of the hall that hides visitors from view as they enter the building. The entrance is minimally decorated with gold leaf and carved transoms to evoke serenity and purity. The squirrel among grapes motif—like the carving over the main door—was a symbol of prosperity during the Edo period (1603–1867).