

### **The Bell of Gion-Shoja, Jakko-in**

The bronze bell in the small wooden tower of Jakko-in was cast in 1752. It is rung 10 times at 5:00 p.m. every day with a wooden beam. The beam hangs from a hook forged in the shape of a dragon's head.

A predecessor to this bell is mentioned in *The Tale of the Heike*, a mid-thirteenth century epic account of the struggle between the Taira and Minamoto clans during the Genpei War (1180–1185). In the story, former Emperor Go-Shirakawa (1127–1192) visits the former Empress Dowager Taira no Tokuko, whom he had adopted when she was 17. Later, in 1186, she took refuge at Jakko-in Temple and become a Buddhist nun after losing all of her family to the war. The two discuss the miseries of the human condition and Buddhist concepts of suffering and rebirth. The bell sounds when they are through, and the former emperor bids farewell to his adopted daughter before leaving for the capital of Kyoto.