

## **The Hakusan *Gezan* Buddhas**

### **The Hakusan *Gezan* Buddhas and Bell at Hakusan Shrine**

#### **Designated Tangible Cultural Properties of Ishikawa Prefecture**

These 13 Buddhist figures and bell were saved from destruction in 1874, during a fascinating but turbulent period in Japanese history.

The statues and bell were originally housed in small temples located high up on Mt. Hakusan, along the Kaga-Zenjodo trail. In the Meiji era (1868–1912), when Japan began to modernize, the government announced a new policy called *shinbutsu bunri*, the forced separation of Buddhism and Shinto. After centuries of the two religions peacefully coexisting, Buddhism suddenly fell out of favor, leading to many Buddhist temples being closed or demolished and many Buddhist artifacts being destroyed.

The policy resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of Buddhist temples and treasures. However, there were also many cases of devout people who saved statues and other Buddhist items and hid them from the authorities. *Gezan* means “down the mountain,” and the Buddhist figures seen today at Ozo Hakusan Shrine were carried down Mt. Hakusan, then hidden away here.

1. Wooden statue of Amida Nyorai Buddha, 1216. This solid wooden statue, thought to have been carved by the famous sculptor Kaikei or another major artist, is an outstanding example of the orthodox school of Buddhist art from the early Kamakura period (1185–1333).
2. Bronze statue of the Kannon, the bodhisattva of mercy, with bronze cabinet, Kamakura period (1185–1333). The figure today is of Kannon sitting on a lotus, but it is thought that originally the figure’s top section was that of an Eleven-Headed Kannon. The style of the lotus shows it was cast more recently, during the middle of the Edo period (1603–1868)
3. Five wooden Jizo statues, late Muromachi period (1336–1573).
4. Wooden Jizo statue, late Heian period (794–1185).
5. Bronze Jizo statue, 1700
6. Wooden Eleven-Headed seated Kannon statue, 1636.
7. Figure of the protector deity Kongo Doji in hammered bronze, late Kamakura period (1185–1333). The bold and unusual technique of this piece confirms its age. It is an important artifact of the Hakusan faith from Japan’s Middle Ages.
8. Hammered bronze figure of the protector deity Fudo Myo-o, 1702.
9. Bronze bell.