

Unzen Onsen Town Religious History Trail: Carving of Daikokuten

If you follow the road over Bessho Dam and along Oshidori Pond, you will arrive at a stone torii gate straddling the footpath into the cedar forest above. Here, the face of Daikokuten, a smiling god of wealth and good fortune, is carved into a massive rock formation.

Daikokuten was originally an Indian god. In the ninth century, Japanese Buddhist monks traveled to China and brought back new religious learning, introducing the worship of Daikokuten to their homeland. By the 1420s, Daikokuten was venerated as part of the group of deities known as the Seven Lucky Gods.

A millennium ago, more than a thousand priests lived in this part of Unzen, and Oshidori Pond was a valley full of temples. The priests were adherents to a mixture of spiritual traditions, including the worship of Daikokuten. Even today, individuals, families, and businesses in Unzen come to pray and give offerings to the deity.