

Gankozankozoji Temple

Gankozankozoji Temple was established in 1322, deep in the forested mountains of Toba. It received patronage from the Kuki family, and Kuki Yoshitaka visited the temple to pray for the safe construction of Toba Castle, which was completed in 1594. The *hondo*, or main hall, was constructed in 1561, and is remarkable for its wood-shingled (*kokerabuki*) roof. *Kokerabuki* is a traditional roofing method in which thin boards—typically cypress—are used to shingle the roof.

The coffered ceiling of the main hall is adorned with paintings, and the walls are decorated with various depictions of bodhisattvas, compassionate beings who help others on the path to enlightenment. Behind the *hondo* and further up the mountain lies Chinjudo Hall, built by Yoshitaka's son, Moritaka, in 1615. The hall enshrines Kishimojin, the Buddhist deity of childcare and childbirth. Both buildings have been designated Important Cultural Properties, and are open to the public.

Gankozankozoji can only be accessed on foot. The hike from the base of the mountain leads through dense forest and culminates in a steep stone staircase to the main hall.