

## Shounji Temple

Shounji is a Zen temple located on the side of a small hill in Tadanoumi, a port town in Takehara. The temple was originally built between 1570 and 1581 by Ura Munekatsu (1526–1592), also known as Nomi Munekatsu. It is characterized by castle-like fortifications, such as *ishigaki* (stone walls) and a zigzag layout designed to slow would-be attackers and allow defenders to fire upon them.

Munekatsu was commander of naval forces for the powerful Kobayakawa warlord family. He constructed Kagi Castle at the foot of the hill where Shounji is located. The temple acted as part of the castle's defenses against a potential attack from the Seto Inland Sea.

The main hall (*hondo*) was renovated in 1955. The temple houses three important treasures: a hanging scroll featuring a picture of Munekatsu in formal dress and samurai armor, an ammunition case used by Munekatsu, and a palanquin used to carry the first priest of the temple. Some of Munekatsu's hair has been preserved here, as a relic.

Shounji offers zazen (Zen Buddhist meditation) to visitors early every Sunday morning.