

Shounji Temple

Shounji Temple was originally built between 1570 and 1581 by Ura Munekatsu (1526–1592), also known as Nomi Munekatsu. It is located in Tadanoumi, a small port town in Takehara. The temple once formed part of the defenses of Kagi Castle, which was at the foot of the hill where Shounji is located. Munekatsu was commander of naval forces for the powerful Kobayakawa warlord family and once was the master of Kagi Castle.

The temple is characterized by castle-like fortifications such as *ishigaki* (stone walls) and a zigzag layout designed to slow would-be attackers, which acted as part of the castle's defenses against incursion 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.

Zazen (Zen Buddhist meditation) is available for visitors to Shounji early every Sunday morning.