

History of the Furubochu

The Furubochu flourished from the late twelfth century until the sixteenth century. As the rival Otomo and Shimazu clans battled for control of Kyushu in the late sixteenth century, the lives of the monks and mountain ascetics here were disrupted. By the late sixteenth century, they had all but abandoned the mountain.

In 1588, warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi awarded control of Higo Province (modern-day Kumamoto Prefecture) to Kato Kiyomasa (1562–1611) as a reward for helping him defeat the Shimazu clan and pacify Kyushu. In 1599, Kiyomasa secured Hideyoshi's permission to resurrect the complex of buildings in the town of Aso and recall the monks and ascetics who had lived and worshipped there. This new *bochu* was given the name of Fumoto-bochu ("assemblage of monks at the foot of the mountain") to distinguish it from the original, by then defunct Furubochu ("old assemblage of monks") on the mountaintop. Even after Kiyomasa's son fell out of favor with the shogun and was forced into exile in 1632, the Hosokawa family, which took over the control of Higo Province, continued to patronize and protect the Fumoto-bochu.