



# 鐘楼と大鐘

## *The Belfry and The Great Bell*

Unusual for a shrine, is the impressive bell east of the *Kagami-Ike*. Bells are commonly found in temples and not in shrines. This shows the legacy of Buddhist temple practices which took place at this Shinto shrine before the Meiji Period. The current belfry structure dates from 1617, when it was rebuilt after a typhoon.

The enormous bronze bell is the third largest in Japan, weighing approximately 10 tons. According to the oral history of the shrine, the bell was a tribute for successful prayers against the Mongol Invasions of Japan in October 1274. Prayers to the

three deities were said upon request by regent, Tokimune Hojo as the Mongols approached by sea. Lights and shadows of *Kuzu Ryuoh* (literally, “Nine-headed Dragon King”) appeared and flew over the port of Sakata to the Sea of Japan, causing a powerful gust of wind which sunk the entire Mongol force into the sea.

You can only hear the sound of the bell on the last day of each year. Both the thatched-roof belfry and the bell itself are designated National Important Cultural Properties.

