

## Honjo Castle Town Explanation board

### Kotokuji Ruin

The current site where the Ishiwaki Kotokukan is located was the temple ruin for ascetic training that was known as Sekihouzan Kotokuji during the Edo period. Those were the days of Shinbutsu shugo (Shinto-Buddhist syncretism), when the Buddhist monks of Kotokuji Temple also served as monks at Inari Shrine in Ishiwakinakamachi, Shinmei Shrine in Sangenmachi, Sarutahiko Shrine in Midorimachi, Akiba Shrine at Benkei River and Konpira Shrine in Tajiri. After the Meiji Restoration, the new government divided Shinto and Buddhism and enforced Shinbutsu bunrirei (Shinto-Buddhist Separation Order) to unify the ancient Shinto-based way of thinking. As a result, Kotokuji became an abandoned temple.

During the 39th year of the Meiji period (1906), the Ishiwaki Ward Association Ordinance was enacted, and the Ishiwaki Financial Ward was created. The former Kotokuji was renamed as “Kotokukan” and became a meeting place for Ishiwaki district with support from the financial ward for maintenance and management fees. While it was used for local meetings, the worship hall where people could get the same blessings as visiting Shinzan Shrine and other shrines was extended in the 40th year of Meiji period (1907) and was also used for Shinzan Shrine’s festivals and religious services.

During the 30th year of Showa period (1955), Ishiwaki Financial Ward opened Ishiwaki’s first nursery school in Kotokukan in response to the requests from the local residents. The nursery school was newly built and relocated to the east side of Honjo Junior High School in the following year and became Ishiwaki Nursery School (Current Ishiwaki Higashi Nursery School).

The current Ishiwaki Kotokukan was newly built in the 44th year of Showa period (1969) to replace the old building. It is equipped with a great hall, middle hall, worship hall where people could get the same blessings as visiting Shinzan Shrine and other shrines, reception room, and kitchen, and used as a venue for various events, meetings, festivals, etc. The Kaguraden (right), Ebisudo (center), Taishido (left), which are remnants of the former Kotokuji period are located on the site. The Kaguraden houses the mask of Ishiwaki Kagura, the Ebisudo is worshipped mainly by the Nakamachi residents, and the Taishido has long been revered by carpenters in Ishiwaki. There is a large stone monument inscribed with “Chokaisan (Mt. Chokai)” beside of the Kaguraden, which gives an insight into the relationship between the former Kotokuji and Chokai Shugen.

Shinbutsu shugo (Shinto-Buddhist syncretism) is a religious concept that united Shinto, the original Japanese belief in gods, and the foreign-introduced Buddhist faith and has been said that it started during the Nara period (710~794).

Shinbutsu bunrirei (Shinto-Buddhist Separation Order) prohibited the practice of Shinto-Buddhist syncretism and provided for a clear distinction between Shinto and Buddhism, God and Buddha, Shrine and temple.

This explanation board is was founded by the East Japan Railway Culture Foundation for local cultural activities.