Tokasan Enryuji Temple

Tokasan Enryuji Temple has been one of the most significant Buddhist sanctuaries in Hiroshima since its founding in 1619 by Asano Nagaakira (1586–1632). Upon becoming daimyo lord of Hiroshima, Asano was keen to establish control over his domain. Subsequent Asano lords followed Nagaakira’s lead, founding Buddhist temples on the outskirts of Hiroshima. The temples were dedicated to different schools of Buddhism, which ensured the Asano family was on friendly terms with all of them.

Tokasan Enryuji Temple is dedicated to Toka Daimyojin, the Buddhist patron deity of warriors. A statue of the deity housed in a side temple beside the main hall shows him holding a sword and a jewel, both symbols of the samurai class. The sacred statue is only displayed for three days a year, during the Tokasan Festival in June.

Today, the main hall is one of only a handful of buildings at the temple, but prior to World War II, the temple grounds were roughly four times larger, with other halls dedicated to different deities. The entire temple was destroyed in the 1945 atomic bombing, and much of the land was repurposed. The main hall was rebuilt immediately after the bombing and then again in 1964, in time for the Summer Olympics in Tokyo. The building looks traditional, but is made entirely of reinforced concrete. Behind the main hall is the temple graveyard, which was one of the sites chosen to house graves moved after the destruction of the war. The small stone tower in the center is made of damaged headstones and serves as a memorial to the dead.