

Komyodo, Former Main Hall

Built in 1701, this was the main hall of Shinshoji Temple before it was replaced by the Shakado. An important example of mid-Edo period architecture, this structure is listed as an Important Cultural Property. The three Buddhas enshrined here are, in the center, Dainichi Nyorai, the supreme deity of Japanese Esoteric Buddhism, flanked on either side by the fierce Fudo Myoo and Aizen Myoo, whose name means “stained by love.” While the faithful pray to all three, the six-armed red Aizen Myoo, in particular, has many devotees, as this Buddha is thought to assist in matters of the heart. Worshippers often light a candle before him and pray for luck in love.

The Komyodo is a fine example of the Genroku period (1688–1704), a luxurious culture often said to mark the high point of Edo period (1603–1867). The building has a hip-and-gable roof, with traces of red lacquer still visible on the roof tiles. Previously there was a veranda around the hall, but this was removed when the hall was moved to its current location.

Behind the hall is the Okunoin cave where a very wise Buddha is enshrined. This cave is opened every year during the beginning of July for the Gion Festival.