

Two-Story Gate with Guardians

Traditionally, Buddhist temples were built on a north-to-south axis, with the main entrance at the south end of the temple precincts. This two-story gate (*romon*) with a hip-and-gable roof forms the southern entrance to the temple. First constructed in 1596 by the local daimyo Mohri Terumoto, the gate was completely rebuilt by another member of the family, Mohri Shigenari, in 1767. The gate is a decade or two older than the main hall.

On either side of the gate stand two muscular, terror-inspiring guardians known as *Nio* (two kings) or *Kongo Rikishi* (mighty wrestlers) dating back to the Muromachi period (1336–1573). Their role is to protect the temple and the religion of Buddhism. The inside of the gate is decorated with carvings of vegetables and ears of rice to promote rich harvests. The current gate was repaired once in 1911 and then dismantled, restored, and rebuilt in 1956.