

Kujo Myojin Shrine

The three buildings making up the Kujo Myojin shrine appear to be typical examples of Buddhist architecture, but they actually serve as places of worship for deities of Japan's indigenous faith, known today as Shinto. Buddhism and Shinto—a name that came into use to distinguish it from non-native beliefs—have been in dialogue with each other since Buddhism's arrival in Japan in the sixth century. Through the centuries until the advent of the modern era, indigenous beliefs were practiced side by side with Buddhist traditions. Shinto deities are often housed in Buddhist temples. Indeed, Shinto structures may serve as guardian shrines for the temples themselves.

The places where Shinto deities are worshipped can generally be distinguished by their architectural features, but Kujo Myojin's main hall and two sub-halls fit in with the surrounding Buddhist structures. Nonetheless, they house Shinto gods, or kami, from significant shrines throughout the Japanese archipelago. Inside the main hall are images of the Three Hachiman Deities (Hachiman Sanshin): Hachiman, the guardian of warriors; his mother, the Empress Jingo; and the goddess Himegami. The sub-halls contain images of other important kami. The earliest mention of Kujo Myojin can be found in imperial records dated 1212, though the current structures date back to the early seventeenth century.