

Statues of Nyorai Kojin, Bishamonten, Benzaiten, and Fudo Myo-o

These statues positioned near Koyasu Enmei Jizo, the main image of worship at Shorinji, represent a mixture of Buddhist and Shinto beliefs. Such syncretic imagery was common in Japan before the government ordered the separation of the two religions in the 1870s. Nyorai Kojin, represented as a multi-armed, feminine deity, combines the gentle nature of Nyorai (the Buddha) and the fierce aspects of Kojin, a Shinto god (kami) associated with fire, stoves, and kitchens. Bishamonten, sculpted as a ferocious armed warrior, is one of the Four Heavenly Kings, Buddhist gods who watch over the four cardinal directions. Benzaiten is both a Buddhist deity and a female kami associated with wisdom and music. Finally, Fudo Myo-o, the wrathful deity with a halo of flames, is one of the Five Wisdom Kings in Buddhist mythology and an important protective figure in the Shingon sect of Buddhism.