

## **Yogen'in Temple**

### **Overview and History**

Yogen'in is a Buddhist temple. Established in 1594, it has a unique heritage as both a memorial to fallen samurai and a repository of important art from the early Edo period (1603–1867).

Yogen'in is associated with several figures who played major roles in Japanese history in the late sixteenth century, a time when warlords vied for dominance. Yododono (1567–1615), the second wife of warlord and national unifier Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), founded the temple as a memorial to her father, the samurai Azai Nagamasa (1545–1573). “Yogen'in” is Azai's posthumous Buddhist name.

In 1619, the temple was destroyed by fire, but Yododono's younger sister Oeyo (1573–1626) had it rebuilt two years later. Oeyo married the second Tokugawa shogun, Tokugawa Hidetada (1579–1632), and decided to commemorate the deaths of certain renowned Tokugawa loyalists by enshrining bloodstained floorboards from the castle where they perished as objects of worship at Yogen'in.

Yogen'in is renowned for its beautiful works of art. These include panel paintings by Tawaraya Sotatsu (c. 1570–1640), co-founder of the Rinpa school, which feature fanciful elephants and mythical beasts. The temple's Main Hall contains works by Kano Sanraku (1559–1635) depicting guardian lions (*shishi*) rendered in vivid colors and dynamic poses against a background of gold leaf.

The temple's Main Hall, Gomado Hall, inner gate, and Bell Hall are designated Important Cultural Properties. The grounds are a compact oasis of natural beauty with seasonal interest from plantings such as cherry and maple trees.