

Goddess of Mt. Fuji

Dainichi Nyorai and the Face of the Feminine

This sculpture was enshrined as Sengen Daibosatsu at Omuro Sengen-jinja Shrine at the 2nd Station on the Yoshida Ascending Route. Sengen Daibosatsu is depicted as Dainichi Nyorai, the Primordial Buddha, above a female deity. The work is a literal example of Shinto-Buddhist syncretism (*shinbutsu shugo*).

Strict separation between Shinto and Buddhism is largely a modern phenomenon. In earlier centuries, people saw no contradiction in worshiping kami (Shinto deities) alongside buddhas and bodhisattvas, and religious practitioners like Shinto priests and Buddhist monks developed a sophisticated theology identifying kami as manifestations of Buddhist deities.

This explains why Asama no Kami was given a new name that was clearly influenced by Buddhism. Using an alternative pronunciation of the Chinese characters used to write “Asama,” Asama no Kami became Sengen Daibosatsu, the Great Bodhisattva Sengen. In other words, the “Asama” and “Sengen” shrines around Mt. Fuji worship the same deity under different names.