

## Kusho Myojin Shrine and Lanterns

Kusho Myojin, located near the northeastern end of the Ninnaji grounds, is a Shinto shrine within a Buddhist temple—a reminder of how these religious traditions were closely intertwined throughout much of Japanese history. The amalgamation of Shinto and Buddhism endured for more than a thousand years until 1868, when a series of government orders separated them. This split, however, was far from absolute, and Shinto shrines often still serve as guardians of Buddhist temples, as is the case with Kusho Myojin and Ninnaji.

Nine Shinto deities are enshrined in the three buildings of Kusho Myojin: one in the main hall and four each in the two adjacent halls. All of the deities are also enshrined at major Shinto shrines elsewhere in Kyoto, and are believed to be gathered at Kusho Myojin to ensure the safety and prosperity of the imperial court, with which Ninnaji had a special relationship. Ninnaji was founded by Emperor Uda (867–931), who became the temple's first abbot after he abdicated the throne, and held the special status of *monzeki* temple, a term indicating that its abbots were princes of royal blood, until 1867. The main hall at Kusho Myojin enshrines Hachiman, considered to be the deified spirit of Ojin, the fifteenth legendary emperor of Japan, and a guardian of the imperial family and of warriors.

Three stone lanterns stand in front of the shrine gate. These date back to 1644, the year the current shrine buildings were completed. The lanterns are in the Oribe style, named after tea master and lantern designer Furuta Oribe (1544–1615), and are distinguished by the rounded shape of the upper portions of their pedestals and the jewel-like knobs that crown them.