

Yuya Bridge (Yuyabashi)

Yuya Bridge was built during the early seventeenth century and marks the end of a period of dramatic social and political flux. In the final decades of the sixteenth century, the shadow of war plunged Engyōji Temple into turmoil. Yuya Bridge exists today as a symbol of the temple's restoration.

By the late fifteenth century, Engyōji had grown into a sprawling complex of many impressive buildings and held significant economic power. But the temple went into steep decline during the Warring States period (1467–1603), when widespread military conflict broke out across the country as various factions fought to fill a sudden power vacuum. In 1578, the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598; then known as Hashiba Hideyoshi) occupied Engyōji, transforming the temple complex into a mountain garrison to quarter his massive army of some 20,000 troops. During this time, the soldiers terrorized the monks and vandalized the buildings and Buddhist relics.

Engyōji's fortunes began to improve in 1620, when Honda Tadamasa (1575–1631) became the new lord of Himeji Castle. Tadamasa was shocked at the rundown state of the temple, and he collected funds to restore it to its former glory. The Yuya Bridge was constructed during this period of revitalization. Three centuries later, in 1944, its original bronze baluster caps were taken to provide resources for the war effort. In 1955, new caps were cast with inscriptions honoring Tadamasa.