

Atago Shrine

Atago Shrine is located on a slope to the north of the Great Lecture Hall, overlooking Engyōji's Three Halls (Mitsu no Dō). It is thought to have been constructed no later than the beginning of the eighteenth century. The shrine's name refers to its resident deity, Atago, who is thought to ward against fire, and the shrine serves to protect the Three Halls from fire, which destroyed the temple complex in 1331. A distinctive feature of Atago Shrine is its gracefully flowing roof. Covered by a thatch made from tens of thousands of thin wooden shingles, the roof slopes gracefully down toward the front, forming an upturned arch. It is under that arch that visitors ring the hanging bell to get Atago's attention, pray, and place their offerings.

Several of the shrines on Engyōji's grounds are associated with Shinto, Japan's native religion. The presence of Shinto shrines within the precincts of a Buddhist temple is not uncommon, particularly within Esoteric Buddhist sects, which often worship syncretic combinations of Shinto and Buddhist deities. Until Japan's modern era, there was no clear distinction between Buddhism and Shinto, and deities from both religions were often conflated. Atago is one such example of a hybrid deity worshipped across the boundaries of the two religious traditions.