

### **Udo Shrine: Sacred Stone (*Goreiseki*)**

This stone slab is one of the oldest surviving relics at Udo Shrine and a remnant of a time when the rites conducted here were mainly Buddhist, rather than Shinto, in character. The stone is thought to date from the fifteenth century, when the shrine was officially a Shingon Buddhist temple dedicated to a *gongen*, or a Buddha manifested as a Shinto deity. This is a reminder of how the two religions, now thought of as separate, were intimately linked in Japan for more than a thousand years. Purifying *goma* fire rituals, which remain important in the Shingon school today, were conducted in front of the stone, which originally had a *bonji* (Sanskrit letter). The carving appears to have been intentionally removed, leaving only a round mark near the middle of the stone. This was probably done after 1868, when the new government of Emperor Meiji (1852–1912) ordered the separation of Shinto and Buddhism, necessitating the removal of all Buddhist imagery from Shinto shrines. In some parts of Japan, this led to the widespread destruction of Buddhist structures, statues, and artworks. In other regions, including Miyazaki, the anti-Buddhist movement was less fervent, limiting itself to erasing only the most obvious symbols of the faith.