

Highlights of the Carvings: South Side

Two panels on the south side of the inner sanctuary (*okuden*) depict one of the temple's most famous depictions of a Buddhist allegory. On one panel, an eagle grasps a monkey that it has plucked from the banks of a fast-flowing river. The monkey reacts in fright, while a monkey on the adjacent panel looks on, confused. It appears that the eagle is attacking the monkey, but it is actually saving it from falling into the water. The monkey represents mankind, and the eagle represents the deity Shoden.

Under the eaves, a colorful phoenix flies above the monkey and eagle. It was believed to have been carved by an apprentice of either master carver Ishihara Ginpachiro or Hidari Jingoro. The phoenix represents peace and new beginnings.

To the left of these panels is a bucolic scene depicting Jurojin, one of the Seven Gods of Fortune (*shichifukujin*). He is the deity of longevity, and is surrounded by animals that symbolize longevity, such as the deer, crane, and tortoise.

High under the eaves, a small panel shows a large green jar, surrounded by figures who represent the historical Buddha, Confucius, and Laozi, the founder of Taoism. Each holds up a finger with which they have tasted the contents of the jar—vinegar. They all agree that it is sour; the truth is the same, even if the ideologies are different.