

Soga no Yashiro (Soga Shrine)

Soga no Yashiro is an auxiliary shrine located directly behind the Honden (main sanctuary) at the foot of Mt. Yakumoyama. The deity enshrined there is Susanoo no Mikoto, a key figure in the mythological accounts found in Japan's earliest written records. The shrine is built in the *taisha-zukuri* style, and it closely resembles the design of the Honden but on a smaller scale.

In Shinto belief, Susanoo is the younger brother of Amaterasu Ōmikami, the sun goddess and ancestress of the Japanese imperial family. After being banished from the heavenly realm of Takamanohara, Susanoo descended to earth, to the land of Izumo. He is famous for slaying the “eight-headed serpent” (Yamata no Orochi) and rescuing Kushinada-hime, a goddess who subsequently became his wife. Ōkuninushi no Kami is one of their descendants.

The sand piled to either side of the shrine comes from nearby Inasa Beach, where the myriad Shinto deities arrive in Izumo for their annual autumn gathering. Worshippers collect a small amount of sand from the beach, depositing it at the shrine and then taking an equivalent amount of dry sand home with them. They believe the sand will bring good luck and offer protection from calamities.