

Enmado Hall

The large wooden statue inside this hall is King Enma, chief judge in the afterlife. It dates from the fourteenth century and depicts Enma wearing flowing robes and holding a ceremonial scepter. The figure is flanked by two attendants and surrounded by many smaller wooden statues of a mother deity called Onbasama. These smaller statues were relocated from the Ubado, a former hall dedicated to Onbasama. Both Enma and Onbasama are central figures in the Tateyama faith, which is centered around the worship of Mt. Tate.

The Tateyama faith holds that devotees can attain salvation through pilgrimage to the sacred peaks of the mountain, a journey that symbolizes death and rebirth. At the height of the faith's popularity in the nineteenth century, as many as 6,000 people are thought to have made the pilgrimage every year. The journey began here, at the Enmado Hall, where pilgrims presented themselves before Enma for judgment, just as their souls would be judged in the afterlife. After facing Enma, the pilgrims crossed the nearby Nunobashi Bridge, an act representing the crossing of the mythological Sanzu River into the Buddhist netherworld after death. From there, they began their ascent of the mountain.

Until the late nineteenth century, only men were allowed to undertake the pilgrimage. Women were not permitted on the sacred grounds of the mountain, but they were allowed to pray for Buddhahood in the afterlife through a rite called the Nunobashi Kanjoe. This involved crossing the Nunobashi Bridge blindfolded while wearing white robes representing burial shrouds. On the other side of the river, the women would visit the Ubado, where they removed their blindfolds and prayed to Onbasama for salvation with the sacred peaks visible in the distance. The

Nunobashi Kanjoe was revived in 1996 after a 130-year hiatus. It is held once every three years.

The Tateyama pilgrimage is depicted in elaborate picture scrolls (Tateyama Mandalas) exhibited at the Tateyama Museum of Toyama, a 5-minute walk from the Enmado Hall. The museum has dioramas showing the Nunobashi Kanjoe and video footage of recent ceremonies.