

## **Eastern Golden Hall**

### **National Treasure**

Historically, Kofukuji had three Golden Halls—Central, Eastern, and Western—at the heart of the temple complex. The original Eastern Golden Hall was built at the behest of Emperor Shomu (701–756) to pray for the recovery of his sick aunt, the retired Empress Gensho (683–748). Upon its completion in 726, a triad consisting of Yakushi Nyorai, commonly known as the Buddha of Healing, and the bodhisattva attendants Nikko and Gakko, was installed on the central altar and surrounded by other images. In addition, the altar was lined with glazed green tiles to evoke the Pure Beryl Radiance Realm, which is the land of the Buddha of Healing.

Over the centuries, the Eastern Golden Hall was consumed by fire five times, most recently in 1411. The current hall was consecrated in 1415. Although technically a structure from the Muromachi period (1336–1573), it intentionally employs archaic architectural features, such as the covered porch stretching the full width of the front of the building, the three-stepped bracket complexes supporting the rafters, the hipped (as opposed to a V-shaped) roof, and the tiled stone floor to evoke the aura of the original Nara-period (710–794) building. Today, the treasures housed in the Eastern Golden Hall continue to evoke Buddhist teachings, reflecting light from their golden halos.