

National Treasure Hall
Sculptures of Tentoki and Ryutoki
National Treasures

These humorous and highly unusual sculptures from the thirteenth century feature a pair of impish demons. Such demon figures are often seen trampled underfoot by Buddhist guardian figures known as the Four Heavenly Kings, but here they are converts to Buddhism carrying lanterns offering light to the Buddha.

Ryutoki (“Demon with Dragon and Lantern”), carved in 1215, is a work by Koben, the son of famous Buddhist sculptor Unkei (1150–1223). The sculptor of Tentoki (“Demon Carrying a Lantern on its Head”) is unknown, but it dates to the same period. One unusual characteristic of the Ryutoki image is the use of materials other than wood. The bristling eyebrows are cut from sheets of copper, the fangs are crystal, and the fins on the back of the dragon that winds around its body are made of animal hide. Both images also feature inlaid crystal eyes, contributing to their vivid presence. These sculptures were originally enshrined in Kofukuji’s Western Golden Hall.