

National Treasure Hall
***Kagenkei* Gong and Stand**
National Treasure

This rare set of gong and stand was placed in Kofukuji's Western Golden Hall when the building was dedicated in 734. Along with the Statues of Eight Kinds of Mythological Beings, it formed a tableau reminiscent of a scene from the *Sutra of the Golden Light*.

Originally this instrument was known as the Golden Drum, but by the Muromachi period (1336–1573), it was called *Kagenkei*, or Kagen Gong, in reference to China's Huayuan region, known as *Kagen* in Japanese. Huayuan, in modern-day Yaozhou district in Shaanxi Province, is where the stone used in for the gongs was quarried. The current gong, which is made of metal instead of stone, is a replacement dating to the Kamakura period (1185–1333).

Made of cast copper alloy, the instrument consists of a stand mounted on the back of a squatting lion that is a later addition from the Heian period (794–1185). Two pairs of male and female dragons curl around the top end of the pole, gazing outward. The gong, which would originally have been gilded, is suspended between their curving bodies. With each scale and hair of the dragons delineated in detail, the gong stand displays a high level of casting technique, suggesting that it made in Tang-dynasty China (618–907), and brought to Japan during the Nara period (710–794).