

### “Sumi oni”: Not-so-frightening Ogres

On the underside corners of the roofs at Toshodaiji are wooden blocks that lend stability to beams and pillars. They are also highly decorative, featuring ornate carvings of mythical demons known as *jaki* which are often shown being trampled on by the Four Heavenly Kings, who are the guardians of the world and of Buddhist teachings. Interestingly, while these *jaki* blocks were intended to be frightening, in more recent years many visitors have in fact found them to be endearing, leading them to be nicknamed *sumi oni*, or “corner demons.”