

**Kama Hachimangu: The Sickle Shrine**

Tucked behind Niusakadono Shrine, Kama Hachimangu is a large, sacred red-bark oak tree in which dozens of crescent-shaped sickles have been thrust, their blades deeply embedded in the trunk. According to the *Kiizoku Fudoki* chronicle compiled in the late Edo period (1603–1868), this was how the locals, who depended on agriculture and forestry for their livelihood, made entreaties to the gods.

The long-standing custom appears to still live on, as a few shiny new sickles can be found embedded among the much older rust-covered implements. To maintain the health of the tree, the shrine now requests that worshippers write their wishes on sickle-shaped prayer plaques (*ema*), which are then hung near the torii gate in front of the sacred tree.