

***Honden* (Main Hall)**

The main hall of Niukanshofu Shrine is a designated Important Cultural Property. Three *shaden* (individual buildings that house the gods) are partly concealed behind the bright vermillion fence.

The building to the right enshrines the goddess Niutsuhime and her son Takanomiko (Kariba Myojin), the guardian gods of Koyasan. The central structure enshrines the goddess Ogetsuhime, who reigns over the realm of food, while the final hall is home to Ichikishimahime, who is considered a manifestation of Benzaiten, the goddess of music and good fortune.

The architecture and decorations of this *honden* are extremely intricate. Wakayama Prefecture's *miyadaiku*—master carpenters who specialize in building and maintaining shrines—have long been celebrated for their woodworking skills. Compared to their fellow *miyadaiku* in nearby Kyoto and Nara, they were given freer rein to experiment and develop new techniques.

Shrines are usually rebuilt on a regular schedule, as it would be disrespectful to the gods for them to be enshrined in a shabby building. This tradition has the benefit of passing the *miyadaiku* craftsmanship and techniques down to new generations. The way the hall appears today, with its fine color detailing and elegant architecture, is almost identical to how it would have appeared during the Edo period (1603–1868).