

## The Nio Gate

The Nio Gate is the principal entrance to Kotokuin Temple. It appears to have been moved to its current location in the early eighteenth century, together with the two Benevolent King (Nio) statues that are housed on either side of the gate. The Nio are semi-divine entities who serve as guardians of both the temple and of the Buddhism faith. They are fierce in appearance and are depicted with their mouths formed for the utterance of “a” and “un,” the first and last syllables in the Japanese language, symbolic of the beginning and the end, birth and death.

The Nio Gate at Kotokuin bears a plaque with a second name, Daiizan, part of the full name of the temple (Daiizan Kotokuin Shojosenji).