

## Main Shrine (*Honden*)

This is the most sacred area at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu. The semi-mythical Emperor Ojin, deified as Hachiman, the guardian of both the warrior class and the nation of Japan, is enshrined here in the main shrine together with Ojin's mother Empress Jingu and the goddess Himegami. The main shrine building includes a worship hall (*haiden*), offering hall (*heiden*), and main sanctuary (*honden*), all under one roof in a variant of the *gongen-zukuri* style that was popular during the Edo period (1603–1867) and employed at many shrines favored by the ruling warrior class. The sculptures which decorate the building include plants, animals, and mythological beings, many of which have auspicious connotations, including protection against fire and evil spirits.

The large black plaque on the Romon Gate at the entrance to the main shrine area bears the Chinese characters for “Hachimangu” in gold. The first character, *hachi*, is formed by two doves, as the dove is considered a messenger of Hachiman. **To the left of the main shrine is Takeuchi Shrine, where Emperor Ojin's famously long-lived retainer Takeuchi Sukune is enshrined as a deity of health and long life. Next to this shrine is the Museum of Shrine Treasures, in which are displayed documents, weapons, and other historical artifacts related to Tsurugaoka Hachimangu.**

The Main Shrine was rebuilt here midway up the mountainside in 1191, after a fire destroyed the main shrine which then stood at the foot of the mountain. The current building dates to 1828 and is designated an Important Cultural Property.