

### ***Sumiyoshi-zukuri***

The four main sanctuary buildings, or *honden*, of Sumiyoshi Taisha are archetypal examples of the *sumiyoshi-zukuri* architectural style. *Sumiyoshi-zukuri* is noteworthy because it pre-dates the arrival of Buddhists to Japan, who brought with them architectural techniques and styles from the Asian mainland in the sixth century. Most other religious structures in Japan were built (or rebuilt) with the later, imported styles.

*Sumiyoshi-zukuri* buildings are similar to the temporary structures created for the *daijōsai*, a Shinto ceremony performed to mark the accession of a new emperor. The style is thought to have roots in ancient palace architecture, and is defined by the features of the hall, dimensions, entrance, roof decoration, and other features of the building. The buildings have simple gable roofs with pairs of crossed ornamental beams at each end. The entrance is in one of the gable walls and, unlike at many shrines and temples, there is no veranda. The buildings lack the central “sacred pillar” to hold up the roof that is a feature common to Shinto shrines built in other styles. The interior is divided into two spaces: an outer sanctuary that is accessed by priests and an inner sanctuary reserved for the deity. Each *honden* is surrounded by a wooden fence that separates the sacred area from the outside world.

In the past, Sumiyoshi Taisha’s four main shrines were dismantled and rebuilt every 20 years. This practice was interrupted by civil war of the sixteenth century and abandoned entirely in the early nineteenth century. The current *honden* date to 1810 and are designated National Treasures.