

## The Tengu Hall of Kokokuji Temple

The Tengu Hall (Tengudo) of Kokokuji Temple is dedicated to a legendary *tengu* that is believed to have rebuilt the temple in a single night following a catastrophic fire.

*Tengu* are bird-like goblins described in traditional folk tales and literature. They are often depicted with avian characteristics such as wings and a beak, and some of the most powerful are portrayed carrying magical *uchiwa* fans made of feathers.

The large *tengu* mask that is displayed behind the altar is the centerpiece of the hall. It measures 2.4 meters tall and 2.7 meters wide and was carved by a pair of puppetmakers from Kyoto. It has large black pupils set in golden-colored eyes, which contrasts with its bold, red face and elongated nose. The *tengu*'s gaze appears to focus on worshippers as they step before the altar. A large painted wooden *uchiwa* positioned to the side of the altar accompanies the mask.

The reason a *tengu* is worshiped at the temple is because of its connection to a local legend. After a fire burned the temple complex to the ground, a wandering monk came from the nearby mountains and offered assistance, promising to rebuild the temple on the condition that the temple priests and villagers go home and remain there until dawn. On waking the next day, they discovered the temple had been rebuilt but found no trace of the monk. They concluded that this feat could only be the work of an almighty *tengu*, which must have disguised itself as a human.

This legend is kept alive at Kokokuji through the Tengu Hall and a *tengu* festival held annually in January. The festival is held on the second Monday of the month and features processions with participants dressed as *tengu*, dances of worship, and other rituals.