



## Sanro-den of Sukunahikona Shrine

*Ozu, Ehime Prefecture, Shikoku, Japan*

Within the compound of the Shinto shrine to Sukunahikona in Ozu, on the island of Shikoku, lies the *Sanro-den* or private prayer hall. Sukunahikona was an important dwarf deity, associated with the creation of Japan and many human arts, including the art of medicine. The *Sanro-den* was constructed in 1934 in the sacred precinct, following the traditional *kake-zukuri*, or overhang, style, supported on scaffolding over a steep slope. It is one of few twentieth-century *kake-zukuri* buildings in Japan, with all but a tenth of the structure dramatically suspended on a frame of long and slender timber posts. The interior consists of a single large room, glazed on all sides, which was used for many decades for religious ceremonies and community gatherings.

After the shrine closed, following a gradual decline in the community of followers of Sukunahikona, citizens of Ozu formed a volunteer group with the aim of preserving and maintaining the historic monuments. But the *Sanro-den* is in a poor condition—until recently, water used to leak into the interior of the structure—and an expert committee has been formed to oversee its restoration and repairs. In addition to repairs to the roof and walls, some of the supporting posts are exhibiting signs of rotting and will need to be replaced. The successful restoration of the *Sanro-den* will expand knowledge of *kake-zukuri* architecture, both ancient and modern, and will allow this special place to become a venue for community gatherings once again. Advocates are hopeful that the restoration will engage the nearby community to maintain the site on a regular basis, and will provide the impetus for the rest of the monuments of the compound to be restored.