

Niomon, Guardian Kings Gate

The four fierce guardians enshrined in the Niomon protect the temple grounds from evil. The two imposing figures at the front of the gate to the left and right are Misshaku Kongo and Naraen Kongo. Since they used to be colored red, they are also called the Vermillion Kings. At the back to the left and right respectively are Tamonten, who grants good fortune, and Komokuten, who inspires Buddhist contemplation. They have the power to see and hear over long distances, which makes them suitable protectors of the temple as nothing escapes their attention.

This eight-pillar gate was built in 1831 and is listed as an Important Cultural Property. Its materials, design, and carvings are typical of early-modern temple architecture. The large plaque at the front of the gate was written by the chief administrator of Todaiji Temple in Nara, High Priest Dojyo (1668–1732). The calligraphy reads *Naritasan*. The slips of paper stuck on the gate pillars were left by pilgrims to mark their visit to the temple.