

## Jindoji Temple: Main Hall

After being destroyed by fire, the hall that enshrines Jindoji Temple's principal deity, Zao Gongen, was rebuilt in 1406. Also called Zaodo Hall, it still serves as the Main Hall today. This building is recognized as an Important Cultural Property.

Enshrined in the Main Hall is a statue of the temple's principal deity, Zao Gongen. Zao Gongen is a deity central to the Japanese form of mountain asceticism known as Shugendo, which champions harsh training as the path to enlightenment. Zao Gongen resembles Fudo Myo-o (literally "Immovable," a wrathful protector of Buddhism), wearing a fierce expression. His representation here differs from that of Fudo Myo-o in that his right hand is raised and right foot is placed forward. Jindoji Temple's original Zao Gongen is believed to have been carved by En no Gyoja, the ascetic and mystic held to be the founder of Shugendo, when he visited the temple. The current Zao Gongen dates back to the Muromachi period (1336–1573).

It is rare to find representations of Zao Gongen as large as the one at Jindoji Temple. It is generally thought that the temple enshrined Zao Gongen as its principal deity because Jindoji Temple was a place of serious contemplation and intense training, and thus the temple sought a deity with a stern countenance that exemplified austerity and self-restraint.