

## **Maki Odo Temple**

### **Inside the Treasure Hall**

On display here in the treasure hall of Makisan Denjoji Temple are some of the finest wooden Buddhist statues in Japan. These are all Important Cultural Properties thought to have been carved in the eleventh or twelfth century, but there is no record of exactly where they came from, or when.

The seated figure in the center is that of a peaceful and meditative Amida Nyorai, guarded by four armored devas. The statue was carved from several large pieces of Japanese cypress. Notice how the gold leaf that once covered the deity's bare skin has now worn off, showing the black lacquer base coat. If you look closely, you can see four *oni*, ogres that have been trapped in various poses under the feet of the protecting guardians.

On the sides of Amida are two of Esoteric Buddhism's Five Great Wisdom Kings. On the right is a rare standing figure of Fudo Myo-o, a protective deity whom people pray to for safety and health. This is one of the largest wooden statues of this deity in Japan. Notice how his right eye is clear and looking toward heaven, while his left eye is clouded and looking down at the earth. The flaming phoenix on his back was probably added later, perhaps in the Edo period (1603–1867).

On the left, the deity Daiitoku Myo-o rides a water buffalo. His fierce gaze of righteous anger represents victory over death—so you can imagine why he is sometimes called the god of warriors. Depictions of this deity come in various forms, some with up to nine heads, thirty-four arms, and sixteen legs, but six of each is most common in Japan. Local legend has it that the animal he is riding on is the ox from the legend of Fukiji Temple, but as this animal also appears along with the same deity portrayed elsewhere, including China and India, the connection is doubtful.

## **Denjoji Temple**

This temple, now called Maki Odo, was built sometime during the Edo period, which lasted from 1603 to 1867. But there's a mystery involved. At the entrance of the temple are written the characters for Denjoji, the name of what was said to be the main temple of this whole peninsula. It no longer exists, and even its former location is unknown—which is why it is called the “illusory temple.” But it is believed that the Buddhist statues enshrined next door in the treasure hall once belonged to that “illusory” temple.

Beyond the temple hall is a walking garden with a collection of ancient stone monuments and Buddhist statues. Look for the stone stupas called *kesa toba*, whose stone tops are meant to resemble the woven hats worn by monks in training, and *gorinto*, the small pagodas used for memorial purposes. The five stacked stones are meant to symbolize (from bottom to top) earth, water, fire, air (wind), and ether. You can also find stupas known as Kunisaki-to, which are unique to the area, and have hollows carved in the stone for inserting prayers.