

Seated Statue of Fudo Myo-o

Fudo Myo-o, “The Immoveable One,” sits cross-legged, scowling fiercely. Fudo is the most important and the most powerful of the Five Wisdom Kings. His power perhaps stems from the fact that he is not just one of the Five Wisdom Kings, but a manifestation of Dainichi Nyorai, the Cosmic Buddha at the center of all things. While Fudo’s expression is fearsome enough, so, too, are his lasso and sword. Each of these implements serves a purpose. His sword, anchored on the handle by a multi-pronged *vajra* ritual implement, represents the penetrating power of Buddhist teachings and their ability to cut through delusion to help followers on their way to enlightenment. The rope symbolizes bringing nonbelievers into the Buddhist faith. His expression represents the righteous anger at falsehoods that cause followers to stray from the path of salvation. Indeed, despite his frightening demeanor, Fudo Myo-o is actually a benevolent deity, and an important one not just to Shingon Buddhism, the school to which Ninnaji belongs, but to many of Japan’s other schools of Buddhism.