

Daishoin: Dainichido Hall

Most of the current buildings on Mt. Misen are relatively new, having been rebuilt after the peak was struck by a destructive typhoon in 1991. Dainichido Hall, however, dates back to 1599, when the warlord Mohri Terumoto (1553–1625) ordered its construction. The site of the hall has connections to the legendary Buddhist priest Kukai (774–835), the founder of both Daishoin and the Shingon school of Buddhism the temple is associated with, and is said to be one of the places where Kukai engaged in ascetic rites when he visited Mt. Misen in 806. Dainichido was the most important structure on the peak for over 250 years, and until 1868, all the priests on Miyajima would gather at the hall for the first seven days of each year to pray for the emperor and the prosperity of the nation.

The hall enshrines three major deities. In the center stands a statue of Fudo Myo-o, one of the five Wisdom Kings of Buddhism and the principal deity of Daishoin. This fierce-looking protector of the faithful is flanked by two manifestations of Dainichi, the supreme Buddha of the cosmos, which represent the two central realms of esoteric Buddhist cosmology: the Diamond Realm (Kongokai), the domain of unchanging wisdom, and the Womb Realm (Taizokai), the world of compassion. On the floor in front of the statues is a low table for performing the purifying *goma* fire ritual, which plays a key role in Shingon Buddhism and is believed to cleanse the mind of negative thoughts and energy.