

Goma Fire Ritual

In the *goma* fire ritual, prayers written on wooden tablets and papers are burned while monks recite the sutras. The fire in the ritual serves two roles: it carries the prayers to the deities, and it burns away all attachments and desires, which are the cause of all human suffering.

The fire is built in a special area in front of an altar of Buddhist deities. Prayers are directed to Fudō Myō-ō, who stands at the center of the altar as the head of the Five Great Wisdom Kings. He is a manifestation of Dainichi Nyorai (Cosmic Buddha), the principal deity of Tendai Buddhism.

The *goma* fire ritual is commonly practiced in Japanese esoteric Buddhism, especially the Shingon and Tendai schools. Originally it was an Indian ritual, but it came into Japan over 1,000 years ago.

You may write a prayer on one of the wooden tablets provided, and then place it in the red box. It will be offered up in the following *goma* ritual. The ritual is performed daily at 7:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 2:00 p.m.