

Mizukake Fudo

A small stone statue of Fudo Myo-o, one of the Five Wisdom Kings and a central deity in Shingon Buddhism, the school to which Ninnaji belongs, is housed within a modest sanctuary at the very back of the temple grounds. Fudo is believed to protect the faithful and to guide followers with the fierce love of a parent. He wields a sword in his right hand and a noose in his left, ready to unleash his anger on demons and other enemies of Buddhism. As is customary for images of this deity, the statue has a halo of flames and a sturdy rock base, which is said to represent the determination of Fudo Myo-o (*fudo* means “immovable”). *Mizukake* means “to pour water” and the long ladles placed by the basin are used to pour water over the statue before saying prayers.

According to legend, the statue was discovered in a flooded Kyoto river sometime during the Edo period (1603–1868) when a bystander heard it call for help. Once out of the water, the deity asked to be taken to Ninnaji, where it was placed on a rock next to a spring. The basin in front of the statue contains water from the same spring.