**Copper Statue of En no Gyoja**

This standing statue was created in 1951 in honor of the 1,250-year anniversary of En no Gyoja’s death, and is an unusual depiction of the founder of the Shugendoreligion. While most sculptures of En no Gyoja show him sitting on a rock, in a rather powerful demeanor, here he is depicted standing and looking straight ahead.

En no Gyoja was born in 634 in the Gose area of Nara, according to the *Nihon ryoiki* chronicle. From childhood, he was fascinated by mountains, and started training in the forest slopes of Mt. Katsuragi. Devoting himself to asceticism, he spent his life traveling extensively, climbing sacred mountains, and establishing Shugendosanctuaries throughout the country. These include Kinpusenji Temple and Ominesanji Temple on Mt. Omine.

There are many legends about En no Gyoja. One has him sitting with his mother in an iron alms bowl, placing it on a five-colored cloud, and ascending with her to heaven. Another tells how he captured and tamed two demons (*oni*) called Zenki and Goki, who thereafter served him and did his bidding. In most depictions of En no Gyoja, he is flanked by the two *oni.*