

Niomon, Gate of the Virtuous Kings

This is the first gate guarding the approach to Iemitsu's mausoleum. These two fierce warriors can be found protecting the entrances to temples across Japan. The fierce expressions and muscular bodies of the statues are suitably fierce for the guardians of a shogun's grave.

The figure on the right is Mishaku and is depicted with mouth agape, as if pronouncing "A," the first character of the Japanese alphabet. The figure on the left, Naraen, has his mouth closed tightly as though pronouncing "N," the last letter of the alphabet. The two syllables combined together form *ann*, a sacred sound in Buddhism which means oneness.