

## **Kuen Jizo**

This is a statue of Jizo Bosatsu, the bodhisattva who aids all sentient beings in this world and the next. It is said that Jizo appeared to the Buddhist monk and mountain ascetic Shodo Shonin (735–817) on this spot. Shodo had gotten lost on his way to Mt. Nantai, and Jizo helped him find his way to the mountain.

This statue is named the “Kuen Jizo,” because it is near the grave of Abe Tadaaki (1602–1675), whose posthumous name is Kuen. Tadaaki was a personal aid to the third and fourth Tokugawa shoguns. Contrary to custom, Tadaaki did not commit ritual suicide when his lord Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604–1651) died, and he lived on to serve the fourth Tokugawa shogun, Ietsuna (1641–1680), as well. After Tadaaki died, he was buried near Taiyuin Mausoleum, Iemitsu’s tomb, in order to continue to serve his master from the grave.

When Tadaaki’s family learned of the story of Jizo appearing to Shodo Shonin on this spot only a few meters from Tadaaki’s grave, they commissioned the statue of Jizo and the stone lantern. Both the lantern and the statue were donated in 1675. The grave of Tadaaki (Kuen) is several meters downhill, behind the stone wall.

The circle with crossed feathers on the stone lantern is Tadaaki's family crest. The inscription on the base of the lantern reads “lamp of continued light.”