

Statue of Kūkai

This 1927 statue of Kūkai (774–835) depicts the founder of Shingon Buddhism as a traveling monk. Many of the most famous religious sites established by Kūkai were in far-off places, including Mt. Kōya, in the mountains of Wakayama Prefecture, and the Shikoku Pilgrimage, a circuit of 88 temples on the island of Shikoku. The long journeys on foot needed to reach such places were considered part of Kūkai's religious training.

A bustling outdoor market is held within Tōji's grounds on the twenty-first day of every month. The market grew out of the shops that served the worshippers who visited the temple for the Mieku ceremony, a tradition started during the Kamakura period (1185–1333). The Mieku ceremony is held on the twenty-first of each month to commemorate the day that Kūkai passed into eternal meditation—the twenty-first of the third month of the old Japanese calendar.