

## Amidado Temple

### Stones with a Message

Alongside the Amida Buddha, the principal deity of the Pure Land sect, two other deities are enshrined in this small hall: Yakushi, the Healing Buddha and the spirit of Kobo Daishi. Kobo Daishi is the posthumous name of Kukai (774–835), the founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism. All the images are shut away inside the miniature *zushi* shrine and cannot be seen.

All of the stones in the vicinity of the temple are noteworthy. The yellow-dye-splashed stone on the right of the group immediately in front of the hall is inscribed with the two kanji characters for *koshin*, a folk religion derived from Chinese Taoism. Every 60th day, adherents would gather here and stay awake all night (usually by making merry), believing that bad things would happen if they fell asleep.

Note the three tallish square pillars on the far side of the road by the stream. They are all inscribed with the six characters for “Namu Amida Butsu,” a short chant that is repeated as a way of entrusting oneself to the compassion of the Amida Buddha. The oldest of the three dates from 1692.

There are also two small images of Bato Kannon, the Horse-Headed Kannon. A close look reveals that Kannon’s crown features a horse’s head. Bato Kannon is the protector of animals, and travelers would sometimes erect such stone images if their horses died.

At the very back stands a single squat, pointed stone. This is a commemorative stone of the kind that a person would traditionally erect after completing a pilgrimage.