

Somon Gate

Somon, the outer gate of Kuonji Temple, was built in 1665, nearly 400 years after Nichiren Shonin first settled near Mt. Minobu in 1274. For Nichiren Buddhists, the area beyond this gate is considered sacred. It was built in front of a small rock where Nichiren Shonin would sit and rest when traveling to the mountain.

The gate is believed to have been built in fulfillment of the wishes of Miura Juouin, mother of Miura Akitaka, who was lord of Kariya Castle in Aichi Prefecture from 1724 to 1726. The Miura were a wealthy and influential family in the Mikawa area. The emblem on the gate is a circle with three horizontal lines in the center, the Miura family crest.

Niccho Shonin, the 36th head priest of Kuonji Temple, crafted the sign on the gate. The three kanji literally read “open, meeting, gate,” the essential meaning of which is: “You can become a Buddha.” It is a message to those who pass through the gate that having faith in the sacred teachings of the Lotus Sutra will open their minds and allow them to reach enlightenment.