

### **Grave of Matsudaira Naomoto**

This grave site memorializes Matsudaira Naomoto (1604–1648), the nominal ninth lord of Himeji Castle. Naomoto was appointed daimyo of Himeji domain in 1648, but he died while traveling to Himeji from his former domain in Yamagata, far to the northeast. The position was then transferred to his son, Naonori (1642–1695). Although Naomoto was originally buried at Saijōji Temple in Kanagawa, in 1670 Naonori moved his remains here in recognition of his very brief time as lord of Himeji Castle. During the Edo period (1603–1867), lordship over a domain was determined and awarded by the shogunate, who frequently shuffled daimyo between different regions as a way to limit their local influence and prevent uprisings. Naomoto and Naonori were each forced to change domains many times during their careers, which earned them the sobriquet of “floating daimyo” (*hikkoshi daimyō*).

The pagoda at the center of the walled compound is engraved with Chinese characters representing the five elements of Buddhist cosmology. From the top, they read “sky,” “wind,” “fire,” “water,” and “earth.” The area around the lowest character for “earth” is inscribed with Naomoto’s posthumous Buddhist name and epitaphs honoring his various titles and ranks.

The surrounding stone wall partially collapsed at some point over the centuries, and only the frontmost section resembles how the wall would have looked during the seventeenth century. The wall around the far side of the mausoleum has been rebuilt using the original stone blocks, but the wall was originally a uniform height.