

The Origin of Katsunin-Ken (a healing-sword)



The Plate for “The Origin of Katsunin-Ken” on the side of the pedestal for Katsunin-Ken

The monument of Katsunin-ken or a healing-sword was originally erected for the repose of the war dead of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) as well as in honor of Dr. Susumu Sato (1845-1921), Surgeon General of the Imperial Japanese Army at the time of the war and subsequently the 3rd President and the Director of Juntendo Medical University.

In 1895 (in the 28th year of the Meiji Era), Mr. Li Hong Zhang, Imperial Commissioner of the Qing Empire, when visiting for the Peace Conference, was shot in the city of Shimonoseki, the westernmost of Japan’s main island of Honshu. The incident rocked the nation. However, Dr. Sato, by order of Emperor Meiji (1867-1912), dedicated himself to treating Mr. Li and he recuperated shortly after that. While Li was being given treatment, he saw

Sato always wearing a sword in uniform, and asked Sato suspiciously why he was all the time armed with a sword. In response to Li's question, Sato answered, "This is what we call Katsunin-ken, or a healing-sword, which constantly fights against all kinds of diseases and will never fail to defeat them." Deeply moved by Sato's words, Li bestowed a poem upon him, praising him as a "medical virtuoso." Sato had averted a national crisis.

Based on this anecdote, the Katsunin-ken monument was erected in the precinct of Kasuisai temple in 1900 (in Meiji 33), having been proposed by a Buddhist monk, Hioki Mokusen, the 48th Master of the temple. However, during World War II, the sword part was delivered to the government for war purposes, and its pedestal, since then, had been abandoned for a long time.

People in a voluntary organization were concerned about it, and feeling nostalgic for those who survived in the turbulent Meiji Era, decided to re-erect a new monument of Katsunin-ken in an effort to hand over the historical heritage to the next generation and to convey friendly relations between Japan and China and promote world peace.

In September 2015 (in the 27th year of the Heisei Era)
Kasuisai temple Katsunin-ken Re-erection Committee