

Honja Osugi Giant Cedar Tree

This large sacred cedar is believed to be between 800 and 1,000 years old. It is also believed to be the same tree as that depicted as a small sapling in the *Kasuga Gongen Genki*, a famous picture scroll donated to Kasuga Taisha Shrine in 1309.

The ancient cedar measures over 23 m in height and is almost 8 m in girth. The hemp rope tied around the trunk wards off evil and indicates that the tree is sacred.

A second, smaller tree, called the Shinpaku or Ibuki, grows from the base of the great cedar. It protrudes through the roof of the nearby Naoraiden Hall. The Naoraiden is used by the imperial envoy during the Kasuga festival every year.

Since the great cedar is sacred to Kasuga Taisha, nothing is allowed to restrict or impede its growth. When the tree started to grow in the direction of the Naoraiden, a hole was cut into the roof to accommodate the tree.