

## Dadaiko Ceremonial Drums

The Dadaiko are the largest ceremonial drums still in use in Japan. During the annual outdoor performances at the Kasuga Wakamiya Onmatsuri Festival, the drums accompany traditional *bugaku* dances performed as offerings to the deity of Wakamiya Shrine. The drums stand 6.5 m tall and are made of painted wood, with cow-leather faces held in place by tuning ropes. The traditional swirling tomoe designs painted on the drums' faces are closely associated with Shinto shrines and have been used in Japan for many centuries.

The original drums were made during the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and donated to Kasuga Taisha Shrine by Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), the warrior who founded the Kamakura Shogunate. These replicas date from 1976 when the original drums required replacing after centuries of ceremonial use. The original drums are now on display on the second floor of the Treasure Hall Museum at Kasuga Taisha Shrine. They are listed as Important Cultural Properties.

The carved wooden decorations surrounding the drums represent flaming jewels and are based on the philosophy of yin and yang. This philosophy was originally brought to Japan from China during the fifth and sixth centuries. It describes the complementary and interconnected nature of opposing forces in the universe. The first drum is decorated with a dragon and the sun, which represent the male, or yang. The second drum features a phoenix and the moon, representing the female, or yin.