

## **Chusha Shrine**

Chusha Shrine, located centrally between Okusha and Hokosha shrines, is dedicated to Ame no Yagokoro Omoikane, the deity of wisdom and intelligence. According to Shinto legend, this deity came up with the idea for the *kagura* dance that lured the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami from her cave. Inside Chusha's main building is a stage where, as at Hokosha, the legendary *kagura* dance is reenacted once a month. Above the stage is the "Dragon Ceiling" painted in the nineteenth century by Kawanabe Kyosai, son of a samurai from Koga Domain (present-day Ibaraki Prefecture) and Japan's first political caricaturist. On display in the Treasure Hall, located on the grounds of Chusha, are a number of Important Cultural Properties from the Nara (710–794) and Heian (794–1185) periods.

Chusha is surrounded by numerous Japanese cedar trees (*sugi*; *Cryptomeria japonica*), some of them estimated to be over 700 years old. In addition to these are the Sanbonsugi, three Japanese cedars that are believed to be over 800 years old. These three trees stand in a perfect triangle with Chusha's wooden *torii* gate in the center. It is said that some of the 300 Japanese cedars lining the path to Okusha Shrine were grown from the branches of one of the Sanbonsugi.