

Hime Komatsu, Jakko-in Temple

Hime Komatsu, or the “little pine tree,” is mentioned in the mid-thirteenth century literary work *The Tale of the Heike* when Kenreimon-in (1155–1214) bids a final farewell to her adoptive father, the former Emperor Go-Shirakawa (1127–1192).

Kenreimon-in was previously known as Taira no Tokuko, wife of Emperor Takakura and mother of Emperor Antoku (1178–1185). After the defeat of the Taira clan at the sea battle of Dan no Ura, she became a Buddhist nun, took the name Kenreimon-in, and spent the rest of her life in prayer and grief at Jakko-in Temple.

The pine tree from *The Tale of the Heike* once stood in a moss garden at the edge of a pond. In 2000, when the tree was said to be 1,000 years old, a fire on the temple grounds destroyed the main hall and badly damaged the tree, which was beyond saving and had to be cut down. The stump remains, sanctified with a *shimenawa* rope of twisted rice straw. About a meter away grows a young pine that is likely the offspring of this venerated tree.