

Holy Ground (Kinsokuchi)

The enclosed plot of land behind the worship hall is the resting place of the Futsu no Mitama sword, the most sacred site at Isonokami Jingū Shrine.

The divine sword is the central relic of the shrine and the physical form of Futsu no Mitama, the deity for whom Isonokami Jingū was founded. **The area is strictly off-limits**, as indicated by the name *kinsokuchi*, which literally means “forbidden ground.”

Ancient records describe how Emperor Sujin ordered the enshrinement of the Futsu no Mitama sword in approximately 91 BCE. The sword was subsequently buried near the Furu River, at a site then known as the Isonokami Furu Takaniwa. A tree was planted to mark the sword’s location. That site would later become the *kinsokuchi* of Isonokami Jingū.

Almost 2,000 years later, a newly arrived chief priest named Masatomo Kan (1824–1897) became curious about the *kinsokuchi*. He petitioned the government for permission to carry out an archaeological dig, and in 1874, he uncovered several ancient artifacts. Among them was a round-

pommeled iron sword believed to be the Futsu no Mitama. In 1913, the
divine blade was relocated to a sanctuary, where it still resides.