

Omizuya, Purification Fountain

The water here is provided to allow people to purify themselves before entering the sacred precincts. Water for purification is found at the entrance to shrines and temples across Japan. This fountain was donated by Lord Nabeshima Katsushige (1580–1657) of Kyushu in the mid-1600's. The ceiling of the building above the fountain has an exquisite painting of a dragon by Kano Yasunobu (1614–1685), renowned master painter of the Kano School of Japanese painting. The picture of the dragon has deteriorated because of time and humidity but retains much of its original beauty. The reflection of this image on the water below is known as Mizukagami no Ryu, or the “Dragon Reflected in the Water-Mirror.”

At the fountain, fill the ladle with water, and use it to rinse first the left hand followed by the right, then rinse your mouth by pouring some of the water into your cupped hand. Any water remaining in the ladle should be discarded in the trough beneath the basin. The order of purification at a temple is different from that at shrines.