

Karamon

The elaborately decorated *karamon* (gate) stands at the entrance to the sacred precincts of the shrine. It has been designated a National Treasure by the Japanese government as representative of the dazzling and ostentatious architecture of the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568–1603). The entire gate was once covered in black lacquer and the ornamental figures carved in high relief on the gate were gilded or painted in vivid colors. Today, only faint traces of this original coloring are visible.

The gate is said to have survived from the lavishly ornamented Fushimi Castle built by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) as a retirement residence. After Fushimi Castle was dismantled in the early 1620s, the gate was first moved to Nijo Castle, which at the time was serving as headquarters of the Tokugawa authorities in Kyoto. It was later moved to Konchi-in, a sub-temple of Nanzenji Temple that was closely associated with the new Tokugawa rulers. When the Tokugawa family fell from power in 1868, Konchi-in was forced to sell the gate. It became the property of the Toyokuni Shrine and was subsequently moved to its present location. The calligraphy on the plaque affixed to the center of the gate is the work of Emperor Goyōzei (1571–1617).