

Iron Lantern (*Tetsu toro*)

An imposing iron lantern nearly three meters tall stands at the entrance to the Treasure Museum. It was donated to the shrine as a memorial for Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) on the second anniversary of his death. The brazier portion of the lantern (*tomyobukuro*) is decorated with openwork designs showing lightning bolts and the sun and moon. The clouds (*un*) and dragons (*ryu*) carved onto the central supporting column give this lantern its name: Dragon-cloud Lantern (*Unryu toro*). The subtle sheen of the massive iron lantern evokes a unique refinement, although portions of the design are no longer visible.

It is rare to find an iron lantern with the creator's name on it, but in this case, an inscription records the artist as Tsuji Yojiro (active late sixteenth century-early seventeenth century). Yojiro is famous for forging the kettles used by tea master Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591), who developed the tea ceremony in a way that emphasized simplicity and austerity. Hideyoshi bestowed on Yojiro the sobriquet “Best in the Realm” (*Tenka ichi*). Having earned this recognition from the most powerful man in Japan, it is perhaps unsurprising that Yojiro took such great pains to produce this lantern in memory of Hideyoshi. His work has been designated an Important Cultural Property of Japan.