

### **Inside the Worship Hall**

The worship hall is the largest chamber of the main shrine building. It is the outer area where people offer their prayers to the deities enshrined in the main hall (*honden*). The ceiling is decorated with 140 gold dragons painted on blue medallions, and no two are exactly alike. They are the work of Kanō Tan'yū (1602–1674), who founded one branch of the Kanō school of painting and was an official painter to the Tokugawa shogunate from the age of 17.

The gold canopy hanging from the ceiling was a gift from one of Iemitsu's younger sisters, and the large bronze urns and candlesticks were from the Owari, Kii, and Mito branches of the Tokugawa family.

### ***Ai no Ma* (In-Between Space) (National Treasure)**

The space between a shrine's worship hall and main hall is called the *ai no ma*. At the end of this room is an altar with images that represent the deity enshrined in the main hall behind it. Visitors direct their prayers toward this altar, since the main hall is not open to the public.

On either side of the altar is a dragon, one shown ascending to the heavens and the other returning from the heavens. Bird motifs are prominent throughout this space in the carvings and painted ceiling medallions.

### **Carvings and Paintings of Chinese Lions**

Chinese-style lions are a common motif in the decoration of the worship hall. Above is a detail of carvings at the entrance to the *ai no ma*. Below is a painting attributed to Kanō Tan'yū, which is located on a panel in the worship hall.