

Ohiroma of Nijo-rikyu Imperial Villa —Ichi-no-ma (First Room) of the Ohiroma—

The original murals of the Ninomaru-goten Palace at Nijo-jo castle were created by Kano-school artists during major renovation of the castle in 1626, in preparation for a visit by Emperor Gomizunoo (1596–1680). This year's exhibitions, entitled "Age of Nijo-rikyu Imperial Villa"Series, focus on the Imperial Villa period of Nijo-jo castle and introduce the roles and situations around the murals of Ninomaru-goten Palace at the time.

Nijo-jo Castle was built in 1603 by order of Tokugawa Ieyasu as a place for the shogun to stay and hold rituals and other events while in Kyoto. Later, in preparation for a visit from Emperor Gomizunoo in 1626, the Ninomaru-goten Palace and other castle buildings underwent major repairs. After the Meiji Restoration, the castle was subject to many changes, including being placed under the control of the Dajokandai (Office of the Great Council of State) and the Kyoto Prefectural Government, before it became a villa for the imperial family and was renamed "Nijo-rikyu" in 1884. In 1939, the responsibility for managing Nijo-rikyu imperial Villa was transferred to the Kyoto City municipality, which has since been managing the villa until today.

Ninomaru-goten Palace during the age of Nijo-rikyu imperial Villa

Around the end of the Edo period, Nijo-jo Castle saw a period of turbulence, serving as a place for Tokugawa Yoshinobu, the last Tokugawa shogun, to declare his intention to return political power to the Emperor. Ninomaru-goten Palace in particular also played a variety of roles after the Meiji Restoration. After Nijo-jo Castle became Nijo-rikyu Villa, the Ministry of the Imperial Household carried out repairs to Ninomaru-goten Palace, which were completed in 1886. The repairs included laying carpets to make the building look suitable for an imperial villa. From 1897, the old murals in corridors and other areas were replaced with new ones.

From 1893 to 1894, the Katsuranomiya-goten Palace, the palace of the Katsuranomiya family located to the north of the Kyoto Imperial Palace, was relocated to the then vacant Honmaru area and became Honmaru-goten Palace, resulting in Nijo-rikyu as a imperial villa with two buildings: Honmaru-goten Palace and Ninomaru-goten Palace.

Honmaru-goten Palace was used as an accommodation facility for the imperial family, and Crown Prince Yoshihito (later Emperor Taisho) and Crown Prince Hirohito (later Emperor Showa) often stayed there. Meanwhile, Ninomaru-goten Palace was not only visited by the crown princes during their stays in Kyoto but was also sometimes used as a place for them to meet important people in Kyoto or as a resting place for distinguished guests from abroad. For the enthronement ceremony of Emperor Taisho in 1915, a banquet hall was set up in the current Seiryuen area.

When a crown prince visited Nijo-rikyu imperial Villa, hundreds of ordinary people sometimes gathered in front of the Higashi-otemon Gate to catch a glimpse of him.

Murals of the Ohiroma

During the Edo period (1603–1867), Nijo-jo Castle was a castle of the Tokugawa shogunate, and the Ohiroma building there, the most formal place designed to display the shogun's power, served as a place for official meetings between the Tokugawa shogun and visitors. For this purpose, various special details were added to the Ohiroma. One example is the double height coffered ceiling of the Ichi-no-ma (First Room) and its floor being raised approximately 20 centimeters higher than the Ni-no-ma (Second Room). In addition to the architectural features, the motifs

and styles of the murals there were also designed especially to serve the purpose of the building.

The murals in the First and Second Rooms were painted by Kano Tan'yu. On all sides of the continuous space of the two rooms are murals of pine trees, which are thought to have been intended to embody the Tokugawa Shogunate's wishes for eternal prosperity. Golden pheasants, another motif of the murals, were so rare in Edo-period Japan that they were sometimes offered as gifts to those in power. The entire image of multiple huge pine trees is contained in the surface covered with a ground of gold leaf without any depictions of their roots on the ground or any other motifs, such as golden clouds, hiding the trees. Therefore, the forms of the pine trees clearly stand out. In the large alcove behind the shogun, a curved pine tree is depicted to look like an umbrella over the head of the shogun, sitting on the upper floor, while on the eastern and western sides, between which the alcove is, are pine branches and leaves inclining toward the shogun. This composition strongly impressed the viewer with the majesty of the shogun seated in the center.

Meiji-era repairs to the murals and the Ohiroma

After Nijo-jo Castle turned into Nijo-rikyu Villa, Ninomaru-goten Palace became a place for the imperial family and foreign dignitaries. Many of the murals there, mainly severely damaged ones along the corridors were repainted and replaced from around 1897. This project was supervised by Yamataka Nobuakira of the Kyoto Imperial Museum, who oversaw the decoration of Meiji-kyuden Palace in 1884, with then active painters repainting those murals while referring to the designs of treasures housed in the Shosoin Repository.

In 1900, the ceiling paintings of the corridor in the Ohiroma were repainted. Although the 250 ceiling paintings were initially planned to be repainted and installed on the coffered ceiling of the corridor, Crown Prince Yoshihito visited the building when only 120 of the 250 ceiling paintings had been completed. However, according to the *Hinode Shimbun* newspaper, the predecessor of the current *Kyoto Shimbun*, the prince saw those paintings and said, "They look beautiful and elegant."

Around the same time, the murals above the *nageshi* along the corridor in the Ohiroma were also repainted to depict clouds and haze with three kinds of metal leaf powders with metal leaf strips of various sizes and forms placed inside the clouds, as well as a wave pattern created with *moriage gofun*.

This project to renew the murals along the corridor, which was implemented after the premises became an imperial villa, resulted in the coexistence of murals dating back to 1626 and murals created in the Meiji era in Ninomaru-goten Palace. The Ohiroma and its corridor thus became a place where visitors could feel a kind of fusion of old and new, the new breath of the Meiji era as they walked through the corridor and the atmosphere of the Edo period when entering the Ohiroma.

Junko Furiya (Assistant Curator, Nijo-jo Castle)