

Towering Cypress The Chokushi-no-ma of the Tozamura

Important Cultural Property (Paintings): Most of the murals in Ninomaru-goten Palace at Nijo-jo Castle were painted by Kano school artists during the large-scale renovation in 1626, during the time of the third Tokugawa shogun, Iemitsu (1604-51).

This year, as part of the series “Birds-and-Flowers Paintings in a Different Key,” we focus on the murals depicted in the rooms located in the northeast of each building of Ninomaru-goten Palace. These murals depict bird and flower scenes that share similarities with other rooms while also possessing distinct characteristics.

This exhibition introduces the murals of the lower level of the Chokushi-no-ma, which is located to the northeast of the Tozamura.

The Tozamura and Chokushi-no-ma of Nijo-jo Castle's Ninomaru-goten Palace

Historical documents reveal that the reception hall currently called “Chokushi-no-ma” was known as “Tenjo-no-ma” during the Edo period. In the palaces of the Tokugawa shogunate's castles—namely Edo-jo Castle, Osaka-jo Castle, and Nijo-jo Castle—the Tozamura wing contained rooms painted with tigers and lions, called “Tozamura-no-ma” or “Tozamura Okachi-Bansho,” located near the carriage entrance on the south side, while on the north side was the “Tenjo-no-ma” used by imperial messengers (chokushi) and messengers of the retired emperor (inshi) from the court.

However, the Tozamura and “Chokushi-no-ma (Tenjo-no-ma)” of Nijo-jo Castle's Ninomaru-goten Palace have three distinctive features that differ significantly from those of other castles. First, the Tozamura of Nijo-jo Castle's Ninomaru-goten Palace is dramatically larger in scale. While the Tozamura of other castles consisted of two rooms on the south side and three to four rooms on the north side, making them smaller than the Ohiroma, the Tozamura of Nijo-jo Castle's Ninomaru-goten Palace is the largest wing in the Ninomaru-goten Palace, comprising ten rooms in total. Next, regarding the position of the “Chokushi-no-ma (Tenjo-no-ma),” while in other castles it occupies the northwest of the wing, at Nijo-jo Castle it is placed in the northeast. Also, only Nijo-jo Castle has a *Chodaigamae*, which is one of the decorative elements indicating formal status.

While it is difficult to clearly explain why only Nijo-jo Castle differs in this way, it may be because Nijo-jo Castle, being the castle in the Imperial capital was expected to conduct negotiations with the court more frequently and on a larger scale than other castles. For this reason, the “Chokushi-no-ma (Tenjo-no-ma)” at Nijo-jo Castle may have needed more luxurious furnishings than those at other castles. Additionally, the Tozamura of Nijo-jo Castle's Ninomaru-goten Palace has the Yanagi-no-ma, Wakamatsu-no-ma, and Fuyo-no-ma, which did not exist in the Tozamura of other castles. The painting subjects of all these rooms are flowering trees and plants, which share common elements with the *Kaede Hinoki Momo Shokin-zu* (Maple, Cypress, Peach and Small Birds) of the Chokushi-no-ma, leading to speculation that they served to complement the Chokushi-no-ma.

Another Momoyama Style

The Chokushi-no-ma depicts flowering trees from spring to early summer. Among the *fusuma* sliding doors (displayed facing front), the first and second from the right and the *koshi-shoji* (paper sliding doors with waist high wooden panels on the bottoms) (displayed on the right) feature peach trees, the upper *nageshi* (horizontal beams) (displayed on the right) show distant mountains and green maples, and from the third *fusuma*

sliding door to the wall painting (displayed on the left) cypress trees are depicted, while the fourth *fusuma* sliding door from the right shows flowering crabapple behind the cypress. The long, curving branches of the peach and cypress trees, and the curved lines at the base of the cypress, follow the painting style of Kano Mitsunobu (1565-1608). Mitsunobu was the eldest son of Kano Eitoku (1543-90) and led the Kano school after Eitoku's death. While Eitoku composed large-scale murals with massive trees using thick trunks and branches, Mitsunobu created an entirely different style from his father's by arranging trees with slender trunks that curve gently, placing them in the foreground and background to create a sense of depth. The painter of the Chokushi-no-ma murals, Kano Jinnojo (1583-1628), was Eitoku's nephew and Mitsunobu's cousin. After the death of his father, Kano Soshu (1551-1601), Jinnojo is said to have received protection from the elder Mitsunobu.

What most catches the eye in the Chokushi-no-ma (lower level) is the grove of cypress trees that pierce through golden clouds and tower higher than the ceiling. The technique of concealing the upper portions of the trees with golden clouds to suggest they continue beyond the mural surface, and arranging the trees in the foreground and background to create depth within the mural, is commonly seen in Mitsunobu's works. However, unlike the delicate and graceful trees that Mitsunobu painted, the trees in the Chokushi-no-ma, particularly the massive cypress depicted in the foreground, have sturdy trunks of considerable thickness that stretch upward toward the sky. Compared to Mitsunobu's style of arranging many different motifs and using complex, multi-layered golden clouds, the number of motifs is limited and the golden clouds are simplified. Instead, by increasing the thickness and size of individual motifs, the mural creates a sense of power and imposing presence.

Lost Murals and New Murals

Among the Chokushi-no-ma (lower level), two panels of the wall paintings (displayed on the left, third and fourth from the right) and five panels of the *koshi-shoji* sliding doors (displayed on the right, fourth through eighth from the right) are newly painted surfaces created during restoration. In 1884, Nijo-jo Castle became an imperial detached palace, and extensive repairs were carried out in 1885 and 1886. From 1871, the Ninomaru-goten Palace was used as the Kyoto prefectural office, and it is said that damage to the murals progressed during the period before it became a detached palace. Painters were hired for the repairs, and it appears that restoration work was carried out on the missing sections. While it is unclear which specific painters were responsible, the newly painted surfaces differ from the original murals. This is because reduced-scale drawings of the murals were created during the late Edo period (Collection of Tokyo National Museum, “Materials Handed Down by the Itaya Family”), and these differ from the current murals. According to the drawings, the fourth wall painting from the right depicted violets and seven birds that do not exist in the current mural. Also, the peach trees on the *koshi-shoji* differ in composition and motifs. These drawings were created by an official painter of the Shogunate, Itaya Hiroharu (1833-82), who accompanied the 14th Tokugawa shogun Iemochi (1846-66) on his journey to Kyoto in 1863. From Hiroharu's diary, we know that he and fellow painter Kano Shosenin (1823-80), who also traveled to Kyoto, created drawings of the main rooms of the Ninomaru-goten Palace from March 7 to 19 of that year. The new murals tell the story of the Ninomaru-goten Palace's history as it transformed from the shogun's palace to a prefectural office, and then to an imperial detached palace.