

# The Great Pine in the Background

## Shikidai-no-ma of the Shikidai

The Kan'ei Imperial Visit — when Emperor Go-Mizunoo (1596–1680) accepted the invitation of the Tokugawa shogunate and spent five days at Nijo-jo Castle beginning September 6, 1626 — was the most splendid event in the castle's history. This year marks the 400th anniversary of that visit, and to commemorate the occasion, we are displaying the murals from the rooms of the Ninomaru-goten Palace that were used during the imperial visit. The visit's ceremonies were centered on the Gyoko-goten, a palace complex built to the south of the Ninomaru Garden specifically for the emperor, but the Ninomaru-goten Palace itself also served as a venue — as a place of hospitality for the court nobles and monzeki abbots who attended, and as viewing space for the Noh performances staged on a platform erected to the south of the Ohiroma. For this exhibition, we are showcasing the murals from Shikidai-no-ma of the Shikidai — the room considered to have been the furthest back in the viewing area for those Noh performances.

### The Shikidai During the Major Renovation of the Ninomaru-goten Palace

In 1620, Tokugawa Masako (1607–78), the fifth daughter of Tokugawa Hidetada (1579–1632), entered the imperial court as a consort to Emperor Go-Mizunoo. A dedicated palace for Masako was built within Nijo-jo Castle, and the procession marking her entry into court departed from the castle's Higashi-Otemon gate before making its way to the Imperial Palace. Over the following six years, Masako gave birth to two imperial princesses and was pregnant with a prince.

Hidetada, now a retired Shogun, Ogoshi, ordered an expansion and renovation of Nijo-jo Castle to receive the Emperor, his own daughter Chugu (Empress) Masako, and the Emperor's mother, the Nyoin; construction began in 1624. The castle's grounds were extended westward, a new Honmaru area was built with a palace and keep tower, and a complex of palaces including the Gyoko-goten was constructed to the south and west of the Ninomaru Garden for the imperial party. Along the eastern and northern edges of the Ninomaru Garden stood a palace complex that dated back to the time of Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616). That complex was extensively rebuilt into what survives today as the Ninomaru-goten Palace.

An inventory of timber used in the renovation, known as the *Zaimokudaka Harai-cho*, contains a reference to the "Tenjo-no-ma (the Shikidai — explained below) being reworked (or rebuilt)," which suggests that during the renovation, an existing structure was substantially rebuilt and connected to its current position, linking the Tozamurai — the entrance wing of the Ninomaru-goten Palace — to the Ohiroma, the most formal reception room. Indeed, in the Roju San-no-ma (Third Room), located directly behind the Shikidai-no-ma, one can see unusually narrow walls and column arrangements that would be impossible to explain in a newly constructed building.

As one would expect, the murals of the Ninomaru-goten Palace — including those of the Shikidai — were also newly created as part of this renovation.

### The Shikidai, Then Called the "Tenjo-no-ma," Becomes a Viewing Area

The wing known today as the Shikidai appears under the name "Tenjo-no-ma" in the *Zaimokudaka Harai-cho* mentioned above, as well as in the *Kan'ei Gyokoki* (hereafter referred to as the *Gyokoki*), a record of the Kan'ei Imperial Visit written by Ishin (Konchiin) Suden (1569–1633). In Tokugawa shogunate castles, the "Tenjo-no-ma" typically refers to a pair of east-west facing reception rooms to the north

of the Tozamurai. In the Ninomaru-goten Palace at Nijo-jo Castle, these correspond to the two rooms known today as the Chokushi-no-ma. Why the present-day Shikidai was called the "Tenjo-no-ma" at the time is unclear; to complicate matters further, the *Gyokoki* also uses "Tenjo-no-ma" to refer to what is now called the Chokushi-no-ma, making the terminology genuinely confusing.

According to the *Gyokoki*, during the Noh performance on the fourth day of the imperial visit, the veranda of the Shikidai — i.e., the "Tenjo-no-ma" — was designated as seating for "officers of the Office of Palace Upkeep, shrine administrators, officers serving the Retired Empress, members of the *Hokumen* guards, various officials, and clerical staff." These individuals can be understood as lower-ranking court officials — administrative and military staff — who served the Emperor, the members of the imperial family accompanying the visit, senior court nobles, and *monzeki* abbots. In terms of the viewing arrangement, this was the rearmost seating area, with only a side-on view of the stage. However, the *hashigakari* — the bridgeway on the east side of the stage — would have been relatively easy to see from there.

### The Monumental Pines in the Background

Behind the veranda that served as viewing space lies the Shikidai-no-ma itself. On the northern wall of this elongated east-west room, two enormous pine trees are depicted. Monumental pines appear throughout the rooms of the Ohiroma, but the pines in the Shikidai-no-ma seem to herald what lies beyond — the Ichi-no-ma (First Room) through San-no-ma (Third Room) of the Ohiroma, the most formal reception space in the palace — or to signal that the Shikidai-no-ma itself serves as a complement to the Ohiroma.

Both the pines in the Ohiroma and those in the Shikidai-no-ma rise from the very bottom of the picture plane without any visible roots, their branches extending beyond the *nageshi* (horizontal beams) above. The background behind the pines is almost entirely gold leaf. In the Shikidai-no-ma, however, distant mountains appear with considerable presence through a break in the clouds in the upper left of the left-hand pine, and the far-left wall features a broad waterside scene. Historical records indicate that this waterside scene originally continued onto the lower *koshi-shoji* (paper sliding doors with waist-high wooden panels on the bottoms), but the current murals on those panels do not match the subjects described in the sources, and the complexity of the paper joins makes it clear that these are repurposed murals from elsewhere. The origins of the original murals remain unknown.

Regarding the artist responsible for the Shikidai-no-ma's murals — excluding the repurposed ones — later historical sources have traditionally attributed them to Kano Tan'yu (1602–74). It is now widely accepted that Tan'yu was responsible for the first through third rooms of the Ohiroma, the most formal rooms in the Ninomaru-goten Palace. However, while the pines in the Shikidai-no-ma curve as they rise upward, those in the first through third rooms of the Ohiroma lean and bend laterally as they extend outward. Furthermore, the Shikidai-no-ma's composition — with its distant mountains and waterside elements — leaves little empty space, whereas the Ohiroma's first through third rooms feature generous negative space around the pines. These significant stylistic differences have led scholars to conclude that the Shikidai-no-ma was not painted by Tan'yu. In recent years, the attribution to Kano Sanraku (1559–1635) has gained considerable support.

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