

# The Shogun Takes His Seat

## San-no-ma (Third room) of the Ohiroma

This year, to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Kan'ei Imperial Visit (the imperial visit to Nijo-jo castle in 1626), we are presenting the Kan'ei Imperial Visit 400th Anniversary Series, which showcases the murals from the rooms used during the visit. The Gyoko-goten Palace, located on the south side of the Ninomaru Garden, was built to welcome Emperor Go-Mizunoo (1596-1680), and the main events were centered around this palace. However, Ninomaru-goten Palace was used as a viewing area for Noh performances on the Noh stage located south of the Ohiroma, and as a venue for entertaining court nobles and temple heads of aristocratic or imperial lineage.

This summer, the murals from the San-no-ma (Third Room) of the Ohiroma, where Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604-1651), the third shogun, sat when he watched Noh performances, will be on display.

### The Kan'ei Imperial Visit and Nijo-jo Castle

In the early Edo period, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616) established the shogunate in Edo, which put him at the pinnacle of the military-led government, while the emperor continued to maintain his traditional authority. As the shogunate was strengthening its control over the imperial court, Tokugawa Hidetada (1579-1632), the second shogun, married his daughter Masako (1607-1678) to Emperor Go-Mizunoo in 1620. It was in this context that Emperor Go-Mizunoo and his entourage visited Nijo-jo Castle at the invitation of the shogun, a visit which became known as the Kan'ei Imperial Visit. This visit served to widely demonstrate the harmony between the imperial court and the shogunate, as well as the power and influence of the shogunate.

In preparation for this visit, construction was undertaken at Nijo-jo Castle to build a new palace, the Gyoko-goten Palace, for the Emperor, the grounds were expanded to the west, and Honmaru-goten Palace was also built. Furthermore, Ninomaru-goten Palace was created from extensive remodeling of the original palace so that it could be used by Iemitsu.

The imperial visit spanned five days from September 6, 1626 (the third year of the Kan'ei era), during which time the emperor resided in the Gyoko-goten Palace, and various events were held daily within the castle grounds. The visit commenced with a procession of approximately 9,000 people, dressed in the finest attire, traveling from the Imperial Palace to Nijo-jo Castle. This was followed by performances of dance, waka poetry, court music, Noh theater, a tour of the castle keep, and other events. Every detail, from the cuisine to the interior furnishings, was lavish, providing the highest level of hospitality. The Nijo-jo Castle of the Edo period was at its most magnificent during the Kan'ei Imperial Visit.

### The San-no-ma (Third Room) of the Ohiroma Where the Shogun Sat

On the fourth day of the imperial visit, a Noh performance was held on the Noh stage located on the south side of the Ohiroma. Although this Noh stage no longer exists, drawings and other sources indicate that it was about seven meters south of the Ohiroma, facing north. Viewing seats were set up inside the Ninomaru-goten Palace, and the emperor's seat was in the Ni-no-ma (Second Room) of the Ohiroma, directly in front of the Noh stage. Bamboo blinds were hung on the south side, and a cushion with tatami mats was put beside it, allowing the emperor to watch the Noh performance with a large *toko* (alcove) as a backdrop.

Meanwhile, the seats for the retired shogun, Hidetada, and current shogun, Iemitsu, were placed in the Third Room. Bamboo blinds were hung on the south side, the seats were surrounded by folding screens, and another bamboo blind was hung at the boundary with the Yo-no-ma

(Fourth Room). The Third Room was a suitable place for the shogun's seat, as it allowed him to entertain the emperor in the Second Room while also having the Fourth Room, Shikidai and other areas behind him where many retainers could attend to him.

Along with these spaces, the murals are also noteworthy. For the Kan'ei Imperial Visit, the murals in the Ninomaru-goten Palace were painted by the Kano school. From the Ichi-no-ma (First Room) to the Fourth Room of the Ohiroma, a huge pine tree is depicted on a gold background, and it is believed that the pine tree symbolizes good fortune of prosperity and longevity. In addition, six peafowls are depicted in the Second Room and one in the Third Room. Furthermore, four peafowls are carved into the *ranma* (transom) on the Third Room side of the boundary between the Third and Fourth Rooms, while four phoenixes are carved into the *ranma* on the Second Room side of the boundary between the Second and Third Rooms. Peafowls and phoenixes are considered auspicious birds, and it can be said that they were appropriate subjects for a place to welcome the emperor and shogun. Although some *mairado* (wooden sliding doors) were removed during Noh performances, the symbolic composition of the space was maintained.

Inviting the emperor to the Ninomaru-goten Palace to watch Noh performances was likely one way of visually demonstrating the prosperity of the Tokugawa family. The shogun would have sat in the Third Room, paying meticulous attention to the emperor's presence in the Second Room. While entertaining the emperor with the highest level of hospitality, he skillfully showcased the power and influence of the shogunate.

### The Kan'ei Imperial Visit as Conveyed in Historical Materials

The discussion thus far has been of the San-no-ma (Third Room), where the shogun sat; however, research into the Kan'ei Imperial Visit is still insufficient.

Information about the Kan'ei Imperial Visit, a major historical event, has come down to us through a variety of historical materials. In particular, the *Kan'ei Gyokoki*, a record written in classical Chinese by Ishin Suden (1569-1633), a close confidant of Ieyasu who is believed to have planned the Kan'ei Imperial Visit, and the *Kan'ei Gyokoki picture scroll*, were published in early movable type printing, making them important not only for conveying the details of the Kan'ei Imperial Visit but also for understanding the publishing culture of the time. The *Imperial Visit to Nijo-jo Castle Folding Screens* are also valuable documents that visually convey the appearance of the procession and closely match written records. In addition, several manuscripts, diaries of court nobles and other materials remain. Furthermore, the *Daiyūin-den gojikki*, which was compiled later as the official record of Iemitsu, and other records have been preserved in various forms.

However, the passage of time may have led to embellishment or alteration of the accounts. Comparing and verifying these historical materials to get closer to the true picture of the Kan'ei Imperial Visit will be a challenge for the future.

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