

Tenshudai, Base of Edo Castle Keep

This was the site of the keep of Edo Castle. The keep tower was the tallest ever built in Japan. After the 1657 Great Fire of Meireki destroyed the third tower to stand on this site, the fourth shogun Tokugawa Ietsuna (1641–1680) immediately began work on a replacement, completing this foundation by 1658. Construction of the keep itself was abandoned when Ietsuna's uncle pointed out that a stable and peaceful Japan no longer needed such an enormous, awe-inspiring structure. The foundation for the unbuilt tower consists of two rectangles. The larger one—measuring 46 metres north to south, 42 metres east to west, and 10 metres tall—was for the tower itself, while the smaller one was for the entrance slope.

PHOTO CAPTION

1. Detail of View of Edo, Pair of Six-Panel Folding Screens (National Museum of Japanese History)